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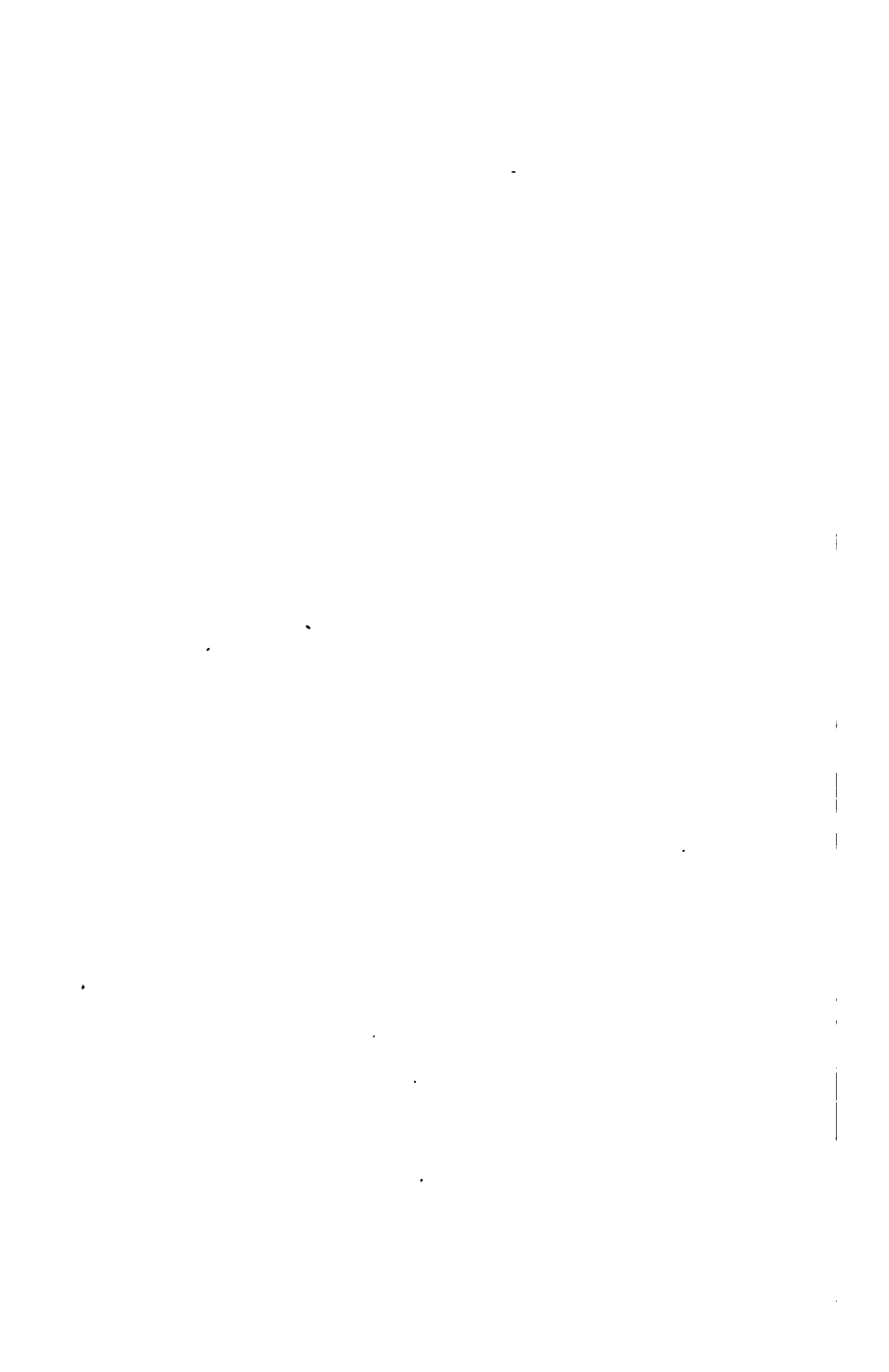


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LOUISA,
OR
THE BRIDE.

Printed by Henry Mozley and Sons, Derby.



LOUISA, OR THE BRIDE.

1900

1901

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LOUISA,
OR
THE BRIDE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "FAIRY BOWER"

She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions,
and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite
maxims. *Miss Austen.*



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582.



LOUISA,

OR

THE BRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

MR. DAVENPORT was certainly a sensible man, although there was one occasion in his life in regard to which some persons would be inclined to question the truth of this assertion. At the age of six and thirty, he bestowed great pains to persuade a young lady, little more than half that age, to become his wife.

Louisa Robinson was the only daughter of an opulent London merchant. He had two sons beside, both older than Louisa. The elder, who was considerably so, had been married several years, and was so entirely settled in the country, among his wife's connexions, as to be domesticated there as a county man. He had married into a noble family. The other son, George, had never been steady or long settled on any plan. He had constantly in view new schemes for his future life, and in his endless changes, became a serious anxiety and expense to his father.

The two brothers had very opposite views on their pa-

trimonial claims. John, the elder, considered that since he had, as it were, ennobled his family by his marriage, and by the same means established it among the gentry of the land, he was entitled to all the benefits of his seniority, and made no secret of his own expectations, as well as those of his noble connexions, that he should be treated as an elder son. Besides these claims, he considered his large family, and the expensive establishment he was compelled to keep up, owing to his connexion and position in the county, as additional, and, indeed, unanswerable arguments in favour of his view. His brother, on the contrary, looked upon John as the favourite of fortune, who had in one happy chance throw swept the board, and that upon this he ought to stand. True, he was married, and had a large family, but it was rather too hard to call his own extraordinary good fortune "honours conferred on the family," and then make this a plea for draining it of the wealth which, in all right and reason, belonged to those who had not met with the same good luck as himself. Besides, the honours, of which so much had been said, were less than nothing. John was entirely estranged from his family and former friends, and except one visit, which his sister Louisa paid Brinksworth, the year before, the intercourse between the relations had been confined to occasional letters, of mere family formality; except on those occasions when Mr. John Robinson chanced to be in London without his lady, and thus could make his father's house his home, as far as practicable and convenient.

Louisa was too young, or perhaps not of a turn to take any interest in the pecuniary question constantly agitated before her. She thought money a very uninteresting

topic, and one quite beneath the attention of persons of intellect, much more the solicitude of Christians ; but her sentiments had never been responded to by either of her brothers, who had always regarded her as a child ; and after a time she ceased to take part in any allusions to the subject. Sometimes, after such passages, she would relieve her own feelings, or endeavour to dispel her father's annoyance by lively sallies of exaggerated disparagement of wealth and its appendages, which were received by her affectionate father with a smile, and a warning of her present incompetent judgment upon such matters. Louisa was never convinced, but while she amused her father by her *persiflage*, or soothed his excited spirits by songs in proof of her theories, she felt satisfied and happy. And while her father listened to the tones of a voice expressive and sweet, embodying her feeling in melodious airs, he, too, for the moment, was inclined to think that all was superfluous, but what assured the heart of affection, such as that he beheld so gracefully exhibited in the person of his lively and lovely child.

We must, however, pass away from the scene of her early home, and view Louisa placed in circumstances where the whole character is called into action, and where, at such early years as Louisa's, the deep feeling of responsibility is probably for the first time thoroughly exercised. At least, whatever others may do upon such occasions, it is quite certain that Louisa deeply felt this responsibility, which, whether felt or not, still exists unchanging and the same. Louisa can, however, best be judged of, by speaking for herself ; and it is hoped no confidence is betrayed by relating a conversation which took place with her intimate friend, Alice Sidney.

These two young ladies had been taking an undisturbed stroll under the cliff at Brighton, and at length, wearied with the incessant clash of the shingles, as they ploughed their way along the beach, for the better convenience of conversation, they seated themselves on one of the "groins," which on that shore offer so ready and tempting an asylum to the idle or the contemplative.

"Every thing we do, leads to something, you say," said Louisa, smiling, as she repeated her friend's words; "I wonder what our seating ourselves here will lead to."

"Something good, I hope and believe," returned Alice, "since I do not think we have any evil designs in so doing.—Have you, Louisa?" added she, smilingly looking into Louisa's face, since there was a little pause and silence, rather unusual between the friends.

"I was only thinking," replied Louisa, "how very seriously, nay, even terrified, we should feel, if we constantly considered your sentiment as really true. We should come to be quite superstitious, and afraid to move or stir."

"We should, and we should not," replied Alice, "for do you not perceive, that it is only the strength or weakness of the principle and character within us, that is being drawn out and tried, in each new situation. If we are true to our best and highest principles, then, why be afraid to move or stir?"

"Because we may move into temptation too hard to resist," replied Louisa.

"We know there is always a way to escape any temptation that comes in the path of duty," observed Alice.

"It is a great comfort to remember that," replied

Louisa, "but a greater to be sure of the line between temptation and duty. Can you always find this, Alice?"

"How can any body be sure?" asked Alice, in reply.

"Then you do find it very hard?" again enquired Louisa.

"Harder in theory, I think, than practice," said Alice.

"Oh, how differently I thought till lately," exclaimed Louisa. "In theory, I thought all so smooth and plain, and now, in practice, I find nothing but perplexity and confusion. Tell me, Alice, how is it all seems always so easy to you?"

"I did not say all was always easy to me," replied Alice, smiling, "and remember I questioned the possibility of ascertaining surely, that we had chosen for the best."

"Then I am sure this world offers a most miserable prospect, even to the most exalted Christian," cried Louisa, somewhat passionately.

"I will not misunderstand your '*even*,'" replied Alice. "You mean it is a miserable prospect to pass a life-time in a world where even Christian action seems placed on doubtful grounds."

"Oh, Alice!" exclaimed Louisa, "I never can believe that; I never have thought such a thing before, and I will not now. If, indeed, we cannot be sure—entirely sure—we are doing right, Christians must really and truly be of all men most miserable."

"Then, Louisa," asked Alice, "why, just now, be so anxious to find the line between temptation and duty?"

Louisa felt herself convicted of inconsistency or weakness, and paused before she made answer. "You have every right to ask that question, Alice," at length she said,

"and, really, I cannot defend myself any way. I only know I feel as ashamed as I am sensible of a great change in my ways of thinking latterly."

Alice was silent. Presently, Louisa continued with more spirit, "When I say change, do not suppose I mean the word to refer to Mr. Davenport personally; in that respect I remain the same; the change I feel refers to my own experience through this affair. Every thing has been so different from what I expected beforehand; and of these things I think incessantly."

"Well, Louisa," cried her friend, laughing, "you know I always say a courtship is an affair which best brings out men's characters; so, perhaps, you mean to add a testimony to its usefulness with respect to ladies."

Louisa did not return her friend's badinage as usual. Alice noticed it.

"Well, I am grave, I know," replied Louisa; "I feel grave; and when I am with you, Alice, I do not try to be more like, or perhaps unlike, myself, than at present."

"But why are you so grave, Louisa?" asked her friend; "I really see no cause whatever for it."

"No cause!" exclaimed the other; "ah, that is because you do not know all; one reason is, because he takes it so to heart, and is so unhappy."

"Mr. Davenport?" asked Alice; "oh, you need not think about him; he has had three months to get the better of it, and I am sure he will do very well."

"Do you think so?" said Louisa; "I should be glad to believe that;—it would be a great satisfaction to me to be sure of that,—and to know exactly how he feels. I cannot make him out, Alice. From the first, he has acted so differently from what I expected; I always thought a

man—especially an old man, like Mr. Davenport—would be very angry at being refused ; and that, afterwards, he would in some marked manner show his pique and disdain.”

“ Well, perhaps he is too old for any such youthful feelings,” observed Alice, carelessly.

“ Oh, he is not old enough for that,” replied Louisa, “ he is very young looking of his age.”

“ Well, then, too grave and dull, and altogether deficient in spirit,” continued her friend.

“ He is none of those, I am sure,” cried Louisa, warmly ; “ you would not call him grave or spiritless, if you had seen him as I have.”

“ Oh, *I* do not call him so,” returned Alice, “ I think him altogether most charming, only I thought you wanted me to account for his behaviour.”

“ Ah,” cried Louisa, smiling, “ I see you are laughing at me, and still a little bit on his side.”

“ I never was on any side but your own, dear Louisa,” said her friend ; “ I would not say a word to bias you either way, if any words of mine could have any effect.”

“ I know I tease you shockingly, Alice,” said the other, “ but now I have been good, have I not ? I have not mentioned his name again since the first day I met you in Brighton.”

“ That is just a week !” observed Alice.

“ And that is a long time,” continued Louisa, “ considering that I see him a hundred times a day. How I wish he had kept away ! It is the most unfortunate thing in the world, his sister being here, and she being so agreeable and kind too. What a pleasant creature she is, and

how fond they are of each other ! Every thing is against me, Alice."

"I must say you are rather hard upon him," observed Alice, smiling, "first to refuse him the wife he wished, and then to grudge him a pleasant sister."

"You may laugh, Alice," said her friend, "but if you knew how tiresome it is to me, you would feel as I do ;— I cannot get them all out of my head ; there is something about them so simple and attractive. I thought when brothers and sisters married, especially grand people, that they cared no longer for one another, but found separate interests, and became as civil strangers."

"And you are sorry to find some people have more heart than you gave any credit for !" continued Alice.

"Oh, nonsense, Alice !" cried Louisa, half amused, half provoked, both at herself and friend ; "you choose to misunderstand me. I am reasonable enough."

"Really, however, it is hard to understand you," said Alice. "What is it you want?—To avoid Mr. Davenport and his sister?"

"Yes...no...oh, I do not care about it for myself," replied Louisa, hesitating. Presently, she exclaimed, "Oh, how I wish he had gone and married somebody else, or had tried to do so the next week."

"Then, you would have felt justified in what you did?" said Alice, enquiringly.

"Yes, to be sure," replied the other, "if he would but have taken himself off in a huff, and married some widow, or rich simpleton, I should have felt quite satisfied, and not given him another thought."

"And now you do not feel justified, and are not satisfied."

"Oh, I did not say that, Alice," returned Louisa.

"Only felt it," added the other.

"Alice, you are in one of your tiresome humours, I do not like you at all," said Louisa, amused, and rather annoyed.

"Really, Louisa," continued Alice, "I want to understand what you really feel and wish; because, perhaps, I can satisfy you by what I have heard."

"What have you heard?" asked Louisa, a little frightened.

"Why, you say you wished Mr. Davenport to marry out of hand," replied Alice; "do you not know there is a report of that sort running about?"

"Is there?" asked Louisa. "Pray who is the lady?"

"One of the Miss Forsters; Mrs. De Witt told me yesterday that he was always there, and has been seen walking along the Marine Parade three times, talking earnestly to Lady Forster, and pointedly attentive to her second daughter."

"That is the pretty one," observed Louisa; "however there is sure to be no truth in it; for Mr. Davenport would never be pointedly attentive to the lady he admired."

"Why I thought you wished him to marry just now," cried Alice, "you ought to be pleased!"

"Yes; I should have wished it, if he had married directly. Besides, Amelia Forster is not half good enough for him."

"A very lovely, amiable, accomplished person; almost brilliant in conversation—just the match that would please her mother, and therefore probably herself!—What more

would you desire for him? Nothing can be more suitable, as Mrs. De Witt said."

"Mrs. De Witt!" exclaimed Louisa, disdainfully; "You know, Alice, that Amelia Forster is a mere beauty, and nothing beside."

"But just now you wished him to marry a widow, or a rich simpleton. This report gives him beauty into the bargain. Why do you object?"

"Oh," cried Louisa, laughing, "Amelia Forster is not half rich enough to satisfy my wishes for him."

"Well, you must leave him to please himself this time; you cannot expect him to refer to one in his second choice, who was so unhelpful to him in his first."

"Very true," replied Louisa; "he was wonderfully good and patient; and he has behaved more like an angel than a man, ever since."

"Like a gentleman and a Christian," said her friend.

"I know he is a gentleman," returned Louisa, "and I think him more of a Christian than I did once. It seems such a chance that a gentleman should be a Christian."

"Rather, it seems an impossibility that a genuine gentleman can be any thing but a Christian," observed Alice.

"Ah! now you are edging in your peculiar notions, Alice," said Louisa, smiling; "however, I wish this one were as true as it is pleasant."

"Why, it can be nothing but pride, or some evil disposition, which prevents a man being a Christian," replied Alice; "and such dispositions are quite opposed to the character of a gentleman."

"That is your way of looking upon it, Alice," said her friend; "it is a beautiful theory, but does not answer in

practice. I know scores of gentlemen, but scarcely a Christian amongst them."

"You choose to say so, I suppose," observed Alice, carelessly, "to show how high Mr. Davenport stands in your estimation; and by implication, I imagine," added she, archly, "what *he* must be who gives the ring."

"Alice, you are a very provoking creature to-day," cried Louisa; "I cannot think why you will persist in taking his side, except it is for the sake of the Groves."

"As to the charge of favouritism," returned Alice, laughing, "I reply first, that I only, as a reasonable automaton might do, follow up your arguments to their obvious conclusion; and secondly, that it would be too late to begin taking his side now—all is past and settled, long ago."

"Oh, I know that very well," returned Louisa, "only I cannot all at once forget what has passed...and..."

"Well, Louisa, and what?"

"I am not afraid of your raillery, Alice," replied Louisa, "so I will tell you at once. I have had a notion, once or twice—you know how often we meet one way or other—I had a fancy he might perhaps have a motive for coming to Brighton, besides his visit to his sister and little godchild."

"Well, I do not say it is impossible," replied Alice, "especially, considering that he knew the Forsters would be here."

"Well, I am sure I wish he would marry her outright, to-morrow, and there would be an end of him," cried Louisa. "I really think I shall never be myself again, till he is married."

"I will promise you the earliest intelligence," said

Alice. "Mrs. de Witt lives next door to the Forsters, and will bring grandmamma daily notice of the progress of the affair."

Louisa was silent ; and at length said, in a tone between vexation and amusement, "Alice, you have been the veriest Job's comforter to me this morning ; and I know you are laughing at me all the time."

"I think I do as well for you, as you can do for yourself, Louisa ; and if so, you have no right to complain."

"You cannot understand my feelings, Alice," returned Louisa, "because you are such a different character ; your principles have never been called upon to conflict with your conduct."

"And how have yours ?" asked Alice.

"Why, you know very well, Alice," replied the other, "I have always protested against—I have always abhorred—the very idea of marrying a man of property and connexion ; especially a county man. It has always seemed to me a thing impossible, that a grandee, or a man of wealth, can be loved. At least, how can we be sure he is loved really and truly for himself alone ? You know, Alice, I hate wealth ; I hate nobility ; I detest finery of all sorts, whether refined or vulgar finery. I had rather marry a man with nothing but sense and his wits to help him, and live over a cobbler's shop, than the same man, overwhelmed with the wealth of Cræsus and the pedigree of a Cæsar."

"Well, it all sounds very grand, and part is very true," returned Alice ; "but you must remember that you were not called to decide in the matter of the sensible gentleman, over or in the cobbler's shop, but of a sensible gentleman with a good estate, of some five or six thousands a

year. This may be a drawback, but it does not absolve you from the responsibility of your decision."

"Oh, Alice! I know that," cried Louisa; "and that is what we began with. I do not think I did wrong at the time. Oh, no! I could not have had him; but do hope for me that it will not all come over again! Oh, how I wish he would have been piqued and proud, or would now become so, take himself off in a huff, and patch up a marriage with Amelia Forster."

"You have no right to wish any body to behave ill, Louisa," said Alice, smiling, "though, at the same time, I do not believe your wishes can have any effect in this instance. Whatever Mr. Davenport does, he will do nobly and consistently, even if he marries Miss Amelia Forster."

"At any rate, by so doing, he would nobly justify my decision," returned Louisa.

The friends, in walking home, met the party which had been engaging their speculations—Lady Forster and her two daughters, attended by Mr. Davenport. They greeted as they passed. Louisa could not deny to herself that the appearance of affairs, as the party approached, was suspicious enough to account for a Mrs. De Witt's report; but even supposing she allowed more credit to it, what then? "Why, then," thought she, "I am at ease once again; I need think no more of responsibilities, and I have nothing to regret." Meanwhile, she was conversing with her friend on indifferent topics, when her ear caught the sound of a step behind them, and the next instant Mr. Davenport joined them, with kind enquiries after Mrs. Sidney, and Mr. Robinson, who had been rather indisposed the last day or two. "Miss Sidney," continued he,

turning' to Alice, "I have been thinking of you the last quarter of an hour. I wished to have your logic and your address, to oppose against those of Lady Forster, who is really deserving of them. As for me, I fled like a craven knight, for I could no longer parry her home thrusts."

"What has been your subject?" asked Alice.

"The Charity Ball next week," replied Mr. Davenport; "Lady Forster cannot understand that a person may not disapprove dancing, and yet not attend a charity ball. She charges me with conceit, affectation, inconsistency, and pride; and though she was so obliging as to observe by the way that these were the usual faults of the 'young men' of our day, I believe I have no intention of making any change in my first determination."

"Why should you?" asked Louisa, with a decision peculiar to her character.

"In order to flatter myself into the welcome belief that I am really yet a young man," returned Mr. Davenport; "if a charity ball bore a charm for curtailing a few years of my age, perhaps my philosophy would not resist."

"Better be old than silly," said Louisa, laughing.

"I am aware of your sentiments," replied Mr. Davenport, "and for that reason did not wish *you* just now as my proxy before my late fair friends. I know Lady Forster would have set you down as—'touched, poor young thing!'—and so your wisdom would have been lost. *Your* doctrine is prussic acid—Miss Sidney's the same principle agreeably softened into noyeau."

"Cordials are not medicines," said Louisa, looking an arch apology at her friend, "nor are my doctrines poison. I do not denounce dancing, I only call it silly."

"And Lady Forster would agree with you that it

would be silly in an archbishop or a great grandmother to dance," returned Mr. Davenport, "but that you and I must be—'touched in the head, poor things!'—to refuse."

"Mr. Davenport cannot forget the compliment he has just received," cried Louisa, not unwilling to give a turn to the conversation.

"I suppose I should prefer my friends not considering such a compliment necessary," replied he, looking as agreeable and youthful as any man of six and thirty can ever be expected to look.

"Thirty-six!" thought Louisa, as she ran up stairs to her father after her walk; "thirty six!—certainly it is a very great age! I do not wonder at his feelings! I wonder if Amelia Forster had any thing to do with them. She is five years older than I am. He certainly is the most agreeable rejected lover I could have imagined. I like our position amazingly, and hope it may continue. Ah! but Amelia Forster!—that would make a change!"

CHAPTER II.

ALICE SIDNEY had been at the same school as Louisa, and though two years older, and of a singularly opposite character and temperament, they early became chief friends. Louisa was never a popular girl at school. Strict herself and with herself, she had not softness enough to bear with what she considered deficiencies in others. Alice, no less high principled, was yet a general favourite; and what not a little provoked Louisa's friendly displeasure was, that none, not even Louisa herself, could detect a fault in her friend's general conduct. Still she did consider that there was something faulty somewhere in Alice being such a general favourite. As far as it can be said that one character acts upon another, Alice's did upon Louisa's, for good. Louisa learned insensibly reverence towards another—a feeling she had never before experienced. She learned that certainly there was one among her acquaintance who held sentiments and principles as high as herself, and yet this one seemed scarcely sensible of being different from those around her. She was conscious this was not the case with herself; and Louisa, however unformed her character was, was not one to lose the benefit of such an example. It was indeed Louisa's peculiar bent of mind to be startled and find improvement in the various events and incidents that

passed before her. She might not be conscious of the mode in which such things acted upon her, but so it was. Thus, as it happened, the very first circumstance of her acquaintance with Alice, served to her both as a lesson and an example. Alice was simple and unpretending, made no show, and was more than overlooked for a time by the ardent undisciplined Louisa. But this could not be long: Louisa was soon compelled to observe and do justice to a mind of a very different power and quality from any which she ever beforehand imagined or would have thought right; and she now rather gloried than otherwise in avowedly courting the friendship she had at first overlooked. Louisa was enthusiastic and Alice was amiable; the result therefore was propitious. The parties from that moment became intimate, and though they seemed constantly opposed in sentiment, and were perpetually pitted the one against the other by their companions, their friendship, though school-born, was real enough to survive its evanescent origin, and having, during its early days, existed upon more than mere girlish gossip, it now was calculated to affect the destinies of at least one of the parties. Louisa had learned to look up to her friend's judgment with an almost mysterious awe. Having begun with something bordering very much on contempt, she had arrived at veneration. She could not imagine how one so apparently apathetic and calculating as Alice, could bury such high aspirations and deep enthusiasm; how one so unlike any body could appear outwardly so very like any body else; above all, how such things could be reconciled with the ease and propriety with which Alice contrived to reconcile them. Louisa had not to call in the aid of imagination in behalf of her

friend, whose own character, her every act and feeling, was an imagination to her. She never could understand, never could make out Alice—scarcely could guess what Alice would say or think under such and such circumstances. And it was this, together with the mysterious sense she had of Alice's truth and goodness, that had imperceptibly wrought changes in Louisa, of which perhaps she was herself scarcely aware ; though she was aware of needing Alice's presence and judgment much more frequently than her natural taste would have desired. Alice on her part was in the first instance attracted by the uncompromising fearlessness of principle she saw in the new pupil. She admired the zeal which led her day by day into some contest for truth or against error ; and she grieved to think that such faculties, bestowed in such a way, must before long either lead to extravagance or sink into apathy. This may appear a flight of philosophy for a school girl in her teens, but those who have witnessed the working of school discipline on active minds and acute feelings, well know that such results may be found in schools, and even in schools of young ladies ; though, possibly, they may not philosophize on the subject. Alice, therefore, prepossessed, where others were not prepossessed, after a time, by inclination as well as principle, often took part with Louisa. Louisa's temper was not such as to brook any thing like patronage ; and more than once, she betrayed a petulance which, towards any but one of Alice's temperament, might have put a stop to any farther intimacy. Alice's forbearance, however, was not without its fruit, though neither party might be aware of its effects. Louisa learned the necessity, and the possibility, of controlling feelings which led to too great vehemence

both of speech and action ; and by allowing her mind to be thus impressed by another, she made the first step towards the formation of a new character within her, though it might appear that her principles and views remained unchanged. As the two friends grew on towards womanhood, Alice perceived that the truth and zeal which had always struck and interested her in Louisa, were no superficial qualities. They did not die away in words, as is the case of so many young persons, especially school girls. There was a depth of thought and feeling, a heroism and originality of mind about Louisa, which almost justified the low value she set upon those around her ; and there was, beside, a clearness of head and heart, which were calculated, in the course of time, to lead her to juster views on this very defect, namely,—the contempt she was inclined to feel for mankind in general. Alice found that she loved her friend much more than she ever intended to do at the first. The fact was, Louisa had very loveable qualities, but her heart was locked up against those she could not, or fancied she could not, esteem. She found she could esteem Alice, and learned to prize the depth of her character more every day. So, with Alice, she had no reserves and no drawbacks. Though so different in outward character, there was a considerable similarity of feeling and turn of mind, between the friends. Louisa was surprised to find her enthusiasm equalled, and sometimes more than equalled, by one so apparently simple and unmoved ; and Alice, in turn, was rejoiced to hear her inmost unuttered thoughts echoed in accents, almost more vehement outwardly than her own feeling. “How can you, Alice!” Louisa would exclaim, in their school days ; “how can you, who feel as you do, and act as you do, sit

by quietly, and tolerate the mean ways of the mean set about you?"

"All are not mean," replied Alice.

"All are mean, or dull, or odious," cried Louisa; "if they are affectionate, they are silly and cringing, and if they are clever, they are vulgar."

"Well, you know I am not particularly wise or refined, so I have no right to be as exclusive as you."

"Nonsense, Alice," said her friend, "that is a piece of humble pride made expressly to call me to account; but you never can convert me to your way—I never can be friendly where I cannot respect."

"You deprive yourself of the chance of respecting in many instances," observed Alice; "you are against every one, and every one is against you. People can shut themselves up just as readily as you can."

"People!" exclaimed Louisa, with a somewhat contemptuous turn of lip, "such people as Emily Wilson, Jane Thompson, and poor little Amelia Vaughan, I suppose."

"Well, such people as Amelia Vaughan," replied Alice, coolly; "she has simplicity and affection, and a low opinion of her own powers, which to me is quite affecting. I would give any thing to be like Amelia in some respects."

"Alice, you provoke me every way!" cried Louisa; "but," added she, smiling, "you are right to remind me of such qualities; I know you select them as a lesson, and I have a great mind to spite you for it by making it make me ten times more disagreeable than ever!"

Such conversations took place almost daily between the friends, and the effect on Louisa's mind was to smooth off

the edge of the roughnesses of her character, and render her more capable of seeing goodness in others, as well as of detecting defects in herself. Otherwise Louisa would probably have begun life with a disregard of authority, a contempt of the established order of society and mankind in general, and above all, an overweening estimation of her own judgment and powers. Her position in her own family was not exactly calculated to suppress the tendency of her natural dispositions. She was the only daughter, and had lost her mother early. Her brothers had become men before she was on an equality, and when she was that, they had become men of the world. She could not reverence them. Her father had quiet domestic qualities, but Louisa was not of a character even duly to estimate these. She sincerely loved him, but he excited in her heart more of the tenderness of a superior towards an inferior, than ought to be ever the case in the relation of parents and children. She became early mistress of her father's establishment, so that she obtained a deference from friends and acquaintances, which is often harmful to a young person whose mind is under formation; and perhaps the fact of her being pointedly treated as a child by her own immediate connexions—her brothers, sister-in-law, and family—rather increased than neutralized the evil.

The domestic circumstances of Alice Sidney were no less peculiar to her character; indeed it might be supposed that she was formed by and for them; though it need scarcely be said this would be a great mistake, for how frequently do we see characters such as these two friends change places!

Alice was the only child of her parents. Her father

was a barrister of great promise, but his health was such as constantly to retard his progress in his profession. Decided symptoms of consumption at length appeared, and after two years wanderings from place to place in quest of that which was never to return, he breathed his last at Torquay. The expenses of his illness had been serious, and his widow found she must either submit to her husband dying insolvent, or give up a portion of her marriage settlement. She chose the latter alternative, in spite of the representations of her friends; and herself and her little daughter, then about ten years of age, were left with a provision scarcely sufficient to retain them within the lowest grade of the station to which they were born. If Mrs. Sidney had not paid her husband's debts, probably she would have been assisted by her husband's family, because it would have been supposed she was in poor circumstances. As she did pay her husband's debts, it was assumed she was very fairly off, especially as she was never heard to say she was not; and therefore it was not thought necessary to bear her and her daughter in mind. The only help that was ever offered was by her husband's mother, who was then elderly and a widow. This lady proposed sending Alice to school for three years, when she was about fifteen. This proposal was not reluctantly made perhaps, but the manner of it did not quite fall in with Mrs. Sidney's feelings. However she knew the advantage it promised to her daughter, and as the offer was entirely spontaneous, she thought she had no right to allow any fancies of her own to stand in the way of her child's welfare. She therefore gratefully accepted it, and Alice went to the school where she became acquainted with Louisa. Here she remained till she was

eighteen. She would gladly have left earlier, since her mother had shown symptoms of declining health, which made Alice feel more uneasy than the occasion seemed to warrant. Poor Alice's fears however were fully justified. Soon after her establishment at home, her mother became a confirmed invalid. The case seemed to baffle the skill of the first practitioners. One by one all were consulted, but neither apart nor in concert did they appear to arrive at the seat of the complaint. Alice acted over again the part her mother had done towards her father. Rather than abridge her invalid of the necessary advice or comforts, she contracted debts, which she was aware must fall somewhere most heavily. She seemed to have no choice: physician after physician was to be consulted; their measures, or some part of their measures, must be adopted; every body repeated this, and her father's family expected it. Alice was young, and cared for nothing but trying every means that promised the least hopefully, either for recovery or alleviation. Her mother was in no state to interfere with any such arrangements, and Alice spent profusely. The less hope there seemed to her, the more lavish she became. All however was vain as far as her object was concerned: her mother was not spared to her. Alice became an orphan indeed. Her mother had been her only friend, and her only earthly stay; the only being in the world for her reverence and her love; and she felt the rest of her life was as a blank—a mere appendage to what had gone before, without interest or hope. Her circumstances troubled her not at all; she had foreseen the consequences of her late profusion, and the thought of her act was a comfort to her. In the midst of her tears, the happy consciousness used to rush over her mind and

revive her,—“ Ah,” thought she, “ dear mamma did not suffer from poverty, nor did she suffer from knowing what I was doing. The remembrance of this will, I think, carry me through all the labour and trouble I have brought upon myself. My life could never be a bright one, why then care for ease? I always thought those happiest who begin life with their greatest trial.”

Alice's thoughts and feelings were not mere words. She knew she had nothing to expect from her relations ;— she did not wish to receive any thing. Though she said nothing, even to herself, her heart had sometimes burned within her, to perceive how her mother had been slighted and passed over ; and any better treatment bestowed upon herself, would have seemed a treachery to her lost parent. One expense the family took upon themselves, and Alice did not oppose it,—this was the funeral. After this, Alice was permitted to impoverish her small property by the payment of such debts as she had contracted. Nobody enquired how far it was diminished ; but Alice was quite correct in her expectation, that she must seek some means of supporting herself ; and upon these plans, she thought it right to consult her grandmother. This lady behaved with much consideration ; she would not allow Alice, at once, to commence any scheme ; but proposed that her grand-daughter should pay her a visit for six months, when it would be a more proper time to begin any new plan. Alice hesitated before she accepted this offer. In her heart she could not love her grandmother ; and to her, the pain of living alone with one so unlike the parent she had lost, would be tenfold more severe than that she would incur by becoming governess, or daily instructress, or by undertaking any other office that was likely to fall

to her lot. Alice however was not one to act by mere feeling, and on consideration it seemed to her proper to accept the kindness of the only person to whom she was bound, and who had before been kind to her. She acted accordingly, and betook herself to her grandmother's house, with a sense of gratitude and a resolve not to be disquieted or offended by things which she knew would occur to excite her displeasure. She was not mistaken : she found herself in a situation which required the wisdom of sense and feeling to act so as to preserve the peace. As to avoiding giving offence, that was out of the question ; for she could scarcely please any two members of any of the numerous families of cousins who constantly visited Mrs. Sidney. At one of these uncles' houses Alice met a young gentleman who was a general favourite.

Alfred Jenappe was clever, lively, and amiable ; yet of a serious sentimental turn, which made him an acceptable companion both to the gay and the grave. Alice could not exactly be designated as either of these, as Alfred would have said, had he the describing of her. He had heard her history, and was resolved to be *interested* in her, but not to admire her. He said to some of the cousins, that melancholy was very well in a book, but that in real life it was little more or less than peevishness, and that the utmost he could do was to pity. He found however that Alice was not at all a person to be pitied, and he had to confess that she was the first person he had ever seen cheerful in affliction, and yet her cheerfulness was of that sort that he could not call it incongruous with her sable dress. He quickly discovered more and more about Alice quite unlike any other person he had ever seen, and the more others detected and pointed out what they con-

sidered his mistakes, the more he was bent on admiration. In this sort of skirmish among his young friends, he often took up Alice's side in an offhand generous manner, and at length, piqued and offended by what he considered rude and unkind, he one day fell fairly in love.

Alice on her side was prepossessed by all she saw and heard ; and was beside grateful for the address and kindness he often displayed in her cause. Her grandmother approved all that was going on, knew Alfred's family, and all were disposed to encourage the young gentleman in his suit. He proposed, and was accepted. Alice knew nothing of his circumstances or prospects. She only knew his family approved of his proceeding, as well as her grandmother ; with any thing beyond she had no concern. She was however startled to find incidentally that Alfred's destination was India. " Well," thought she, " I have nothing to leave behind ; who so fit for India ? and if I had any thing to leave, who so fit to leave it for, as one so good and generous as he !" But Alice was doomed to a farther surprise. Alfred was going to India certainly, and that immediately, but Alice was not to accompany him. The plan was, that Alfred was to return in five years and claim his bride. Alfred could scarcely complain. His marriage at this moment would have been most imprudent, or rather impossible. He had persuaded his parents into it, and he could not but acquiesce in the arrangements they made. He was however disappointed, and felt ill used by some one or other ; he felt sure a better plan could have been devised. Perhaps Mrs. Sidney was in fault—somebody was, he was sure, though he could not tell who. In a very few weeks he sailed. Alice was very miserable ; she could scarcely

tell why. She feared she had become latterly sour and morose ; nobody pleased her—no, not even Alfred. He was affectionate and sanguine, looked upon five years as nothing ; he was as clever and amusing as ever ; but she wanted something, she could not say what. He was to write regularly, and that was a great relief. She had been much perplexed at her changed circumstances. She did not know if Alfred and his family were aware of her intentions of employing herself, and she thought she ought to mention them before he left. Alfred was surprised ; he lamented the necessity, but had no power of obviating it. It was equally impossible for Alice to have availed herself of it, had he had the power he desired. Matters then were left just as before. Alice had a letter written on the voyage, in very good spirits. Every thing was bright and hopeful. Alfred only found one defect, namely, the absence of Alice. He was consoling himself as much as possible, he said, by making out a likeness of her in the prettiest of his fellow passengers—a young lady in person certainly not unlike, but how unlike in mind !—a weak, timid, silly girl, tame and spiritless, who lounged on a sofa, read or talked over Byron and L. E. L. all day, and dreamed of them all night. He then drew an amusing picture of the cabin scene, and gave a lively account of his sentimental conversations with Miss Long, when it was his secret endeavour to excite a feeling, or a sentiment, or a glance, that should really recall the real Alice, now so far away. The real Alice smiled at the warm expressions of disappointment his failure drew forth ; and was glad to find that her despondency much disappeared on the receipt of this letter. She believed that her spirits had been altogether depressed by all she had latterly gone

through, and that if she could but be once settled in her plans, she should feel quite at ease again. But her grandmother was not a person to allow her to settle. Mrs. Sidney had become used to Alice, and liked her, so she did not wish her to quit ; but Alice occasioned differences and jealousies among the rest of the family, so she did not like her to remain. Alice found she must take her concerns into her own hands, and so, after acquiescing in many postponements, on the expiration of the second six months, she pressed to be allowed to put in practice the plans which had already received the sanction of her friends. Alice was at length permitted to do so, and every thing was arranged for her to take the office of musical instructress in a first-rate establishment for young ladies. She chose this plan in the first instance, as being more suited to her years and experience.

Before the day arrived for Alice's removal, her grandmother was seized with an attack of paralysis. It seemed quite impossible that Alice could fulfil her engagement ; indeed all the family agreed it would be the height of ingratitude for Alice to leave her grandmamma under such circumstances, for none knew Mrs. Sidney's ways and wishes as Alice did. Alice herself saw the necessity, for nobody offered to take her place.—“No one but Alice,” they said, “could go through so much fatigue.”

As soon as Mrs. Sidney was recovered sufficiently to understand and remember how matters stood, she authoritatively put an end to any present scheme for Alice leaving ; declaring she could not do without one she had become so accustomed to have about her. She was ordered to Brighton, and to Brighton Alice also must go. Alice's engagement was therefore put an end to entirely.

In the midst of the excitement of this illness Alice received the following letter from Alfred, from India, which seems in a peculiar manner to be a land either the nursery or the grave of constancy :—

“ I have too much confidence in my dear Alice’s calm judgment to doubt as to her entering fully into the subject of my present letter. I doubt not that you, dear Alice, as well as myself, feel the difference of the absence and presence of those we love, and I doubt not that my thoughts and my feelings have often found an echo in your heart. It is not that love and respect are less, or that new objects arise to supplant that which is not presented to the outward eye ; it is that there is an ever-present chain binding down the faculties, pressing upon the heart, making happiness no happiness, and hope no hope. Let us then, my dear friend, respect each other not a whit less—love each other no less, if it so may be ; but for your own sake, as well as mine, let us consider ourselves free till we meet again. Let us console ourselves in the remembrance that we are not in fault. The fault, if fault there is, is in my parents, who cruelly forbade me to carry with me her the chosen of my heart’s affection. I am sure you will not blame me for stepping forward thus and in a manly way speaking my mind, rather than drag on an existence with sufferings such as those I feel convinced you have shared. I shall not mention this subject to my family till I have received your reply, for I would not for worlds forestall your feelings, or compel you to an act which I wish to be as free and friendly as my own. If you bind me to our engagement, say so frankly, and you shall see what I can bear for your dear sake,” &c. &c.

It is not necessary to give Alice's feelings on the receipt of this letter. It will be doing her more justice perhaps to exhibit her after character; for if ever the circumstances of a young person under twenty years of age necessarily led to moroseness, surely Alice Sidney should have been an irreclaimable misanthrope. Her outward acts however exhibited no extravagancies. As soon as her grandmother was equal to hear the contents of the letter, she imparted them to her, as well as her reply, which simply released Alfred not only for the five years he requested, but "for ever." Afterwards she enclosed a copy of both to Alfred's mother, and then seemed to go on as usual.

Louisa, of course, heard the outline, but she was with her sister-in-law in the country at the beginning of the affair, and at the end, too indignant at the baseness of the man, to sympathize in any suitable manner with Alice's feelings. Alice spoke of the affair as little as possible. She was ashamed for him, and felt more than all for herself, the degradation of ever having preferred such a man. "Ah," thought she, often and often, during her sleepless nights, "this is from being left to judge for myself. Mamma would never have approved a person with a heart like that, and I should have been safe;—but I am safe; I am spared; let me remember that, if I erred, it was not for want of consideration or prayer; and my prayers are now answered, in being preserved from connexion with such a man. I only hope I do not think too meanly of him."

It may throw some light on the character of this young lady, to give some lines that were written by her, just

after she left school, before any of her troubles came upon her.

"..... unspotted from the world."

I ask not worldly pomp or power,
Nor riches' golden reign,
Nor fashion's wand, nor beauty's dower,
Nor pleasure's painted train.

Keep far from me, O Lord, the snare
That earthly knowledge brings,
Deep science' all-absorbing care,
The love of hidden things !

The fond pursuit of taste and arts, .
The intellectual mind,
The skill the mimic world imparts,
Of gentleness refined.

Nor dearer scenes, O Lord, I ask,
Some love-lit spot to see,
Nor drearier, where a self-crossed task
Seems offering meet for Thee.

No, never I my voice will raise
For purest goods below ;
Be mine Thy Will—fix Thou my ways,
Good Lord, for weal or woe !

Yet, Saviour, should Thy loving care
Set me Thy path of pain,
O, keep me through the thorny snare,
Untouched by worldly stain.

Or should Thy love, in ease secure,
Affix my harder lot,
Still keep my heart unharmed and pure,
And clear from worldly spot.

* * * * *

Alice accompanied her grandmother to Brighton. Mrs. Sidney did not much improve in health, but she liked the place, and she began to hint to Alice, that she enjoyed the quiet and seclusion ; for, latterly, the constant visits of her numerous grand-children, and the topics they were in the habit of discussing, had been very exciting to her, and now she dreaded a return to her home in London.

Louisa had not seen Alice since the latter left London, and after her refusal of Mr. Davenport, she persuaded her father, who was always something of an invalid, to go down to Brighton. Her principal object was to see Alice.

CHAPTER III.

LET us now return to the subject which was broken off by the details of the foregoing chapter. Louisa did not find the thought of Mr. Davenport become more wearying or less engrossing,—rather the contrary; for she saw a great deal of him, and understood his character better than she had ever done before. She had not yet decided what degree of influence Amelia Forster possessed. Mrs. De Witt persisted in her report, and constantly brought new facts in support of it. But Mr. Davenport's own taste, pursuits, and general opinions, seemed so opposite to such characters as those of the Forster family, that when Louisa looked upon the affair from this side, she was ready to treat the idea with contempt. This uncertainty doubly annoyed her; first, on her own account. She hated the suspense, and more than this, she hated the sort of confession this feeling involved. Secondly, she was piqued at being unable to decipher a character, much more one so plain and unintricate as Mr. Davenport's had always appeared to her.

But for the discipline Louisa had given her mind, through the influence and example of Alice; at this point in her life, she most likely would have acted in some way or other with unbecoming impetuosity. As it was, she felt constantly reined in as by a safe guiding hand. Thus

it is that friends, either natural or acquired, are given us to check and to lead us when we are in peril of acting by our too natural impulses, or when we find ourselves in new and difficult situations. The vicinity of Alice also was a great comfort to Louisa, who, frank and perfectly unreserved where she confided and loved, did not hesitate to discuss the subject in all its aspects; nor did Alice shrink from such conversations. She knew the relief of such intercourse, and she rejoiced to give full play and range to her friend's sentiments and feelings, so as to lead to a reasonable and happy decision. Therefore Alice was always a ready listener, warm in true sympathy, though lively in her somewhat perverse expression of it.

Another circumstance rendered Alice a peculiarly suitable confidant in the present case. She was a second cousin of an old and intimate friend of Mr. Davenport's. This Mr. Grove was a clergyman, and was now rector of Chadleigh, the village to which Branstone Park, Mr. Davenport's place, was attached. Alice had been accustomed to see Mr. Grove occasionally in his visits to London all her life, and had often heard through him of Mr. Davenport and his proceedings. In many particulars she was better acquainted with Mr. Davenport and his plans than Louisa; since, besides this knowledge, the Sidney family never failed to question Mr. Grove on every minute particular of his friend's proceedings, especially now that Mr. Davenport had become his squire; and Alice had been frequently present during these examinations and investigations.

"Alice," cried Louisa, one day as they were sitting together in Mrs. Sidney's drawing-room, at Brighton,

"Alice, I could quite quarrel with you for the turn events have taken in your fortunes!"

"How so?" asked Alice.

"Why that you should be sitting here, in this pretty room, as idle as any fine lady, over a mere piece of fancy work! I had pictured you by this time in full usefulness among a troop of young-lady-savages, swaying and ruling them like Orpheus, with the sweet harmony of your own sweet soul. Above all, I thought to see the mastery of mind over the cold customs and etiquettes of the world. I thought,—'Alice is a lady; Alice has a master-mind; Alice at any rate will break down and overthrow all that opposes her equality with that miserable majority, her superior inferiors.' Oh, how I was vexed when I heard the last final disappointment of my fond hope!"

Alice smiled at her friend's warmth. "I wish, Louisa," said she, "that you would look more to realities and less to imaginations."

"But my picture *is* a reality," continued Louisa.

"You cannot deny it is at present *but* a picture," returned her friend.

"Part has had a living existence at any rate," observed Louisa; "did you not melt and tame one wild savage in your youth? How much more ought one not to expect at maturer years?"

"If your fact were correct," said Alice, smiling, "the parallel does not support itself: an instructress, not a school girl, should have tamed the wild savage."

"And you mean to insinuate that the wild savage was beyond any such ordinary means," returned Louisa. "Well, it may be so, but I cannot help thinking that if I had had an Alice Sidney for a governess instead of good

Mrs. Quaintain and Mademoiselle, I should have loved her as I did Alice Sidney as a school-fellow."

"It is neither fair nor safe to indulge such thoughts and fancies, Louisa," observed her friend; "if we are not at our best under our appointed circumstances, we shall scarcely be better under any apparently more promising. Do you disbelieve that the lot of each of us is ordered to us for good?"

"But you cannot deny that some are more favoured than others in their circumstances for advancement in religion and goodness," observed Louisa.

"It may be so," returned her friend, "but I could make out positions on the other side apparently as incontrovertible as any of yours. At any rate, I will say we are apt to take such assertions too much for granted, and allow them in the general, without going to each particular and individual case. Surely we are misled if we attempt to moralize *en masse*."

"Ah, Alice!" cried Louisa, smiling, "at your old trick, as usual!—bidding us think of ourselves rather than our neighbours!"

"That was not my meaning," replied Alice, "though I see no harm if it had been."

"I know your next step would have been that," returned the other, "whether you meant it or not; so now I will forestall you and lead a step beyond, for I do want to have one last talk with you on my own particular individual case."

"One last talk, Louisa! What does that mean?"

"Why, really I do not know, and that is what I want to talk about."

"I suppose, then, you have grounds for deciding the question of Mr. Davenport's attentions to Amelia Forster."

"Oh, I never gave much credit to that, though I confess it did frighten me a little," replied Louisa.

"Frighten you, Louisa! What does that mean?"

"If you ask me the meaning of every word I say, Alice," returned Louisa, "I really cannot talk to you."

"Very well, then, we will discuss without meaning and argue without reason."

"Nonsense, Alice!" cried Louisa, "you know what I mean."

"Oh, I can guess—go on, pray."

"Really, Alice, you are intolerable," cried Louisa, "but I am determined not to mind you, and I do mean to go on to my few last words."

"Then I suppose you have discovered that Mr. Davenport has no designs in the Forster quarter: you are resolved upon a re-dismissal?"

"I am resolved to make up my mind one way or other in case it comes to a point," replied Louisa, "and really I do wish it would come to a point, so that there should be an end of it at once."

"I thought there was an end," said Alice; "it is your own fault if there is not."

"Well, Alice, let it be my own fault," replied Louisa, a little teased; "perhaps part is my own fault; but part also is his, for being different from other people, and being so different from what he seemed."

"What, so much younger?"

"Nonsense, Alice!" exclaimed Louisa.

"Then, poorer?"

"No, no, Alice!" repeated Louisa.

"Then, not so popular?"

"No, Alice, no!" cried the other, "I cannot flatter myself into any of these good things. It is not in externals there is any difference, nor even in the person himself.—Now, Alice," continued she, appealingly, "be a good creature and listen to me."

"Well, I am ready to listen or to talk, to agree or object, just as you please," returned her friend.

"Well, then, now, should you like, Alice, to change all your views in one moment, and contradict every image of your former life?"

"No, not at all," replied Alice, "and there is one image, as you call it, that I should hope not to dare to contradict."

"And what do you call that image?"

"The following the leadings of Providence," replied Alice.

"Well, very true," returned the other, "but then I might persuade myself that however old, and disagreeable, and exceptionable a man was, if only he asked me to marry him, it was the leading of Providence that I should do so."

"If you please to look upon every such opportunity as 'a call,' I do not see how any one can object," said Alice; "but surely we are free to accept or refuse any such prospects of change, whether they relate to marriage or to any other subject connected with our state. No one would controvert this in such matters; it is only when the subject-matter is religion that this view is pushed on to fanaticism."

"And then people make their own choice, and stand by it, however wild," observed Louisa. "I do not think

of such people, but I do think, when the question is so serious a one as that of choosing a person as a companion and guide for the rest of one's life, one ought to have a most decided and undoubted feeling of preference, as well as merely the visible testimony of a man being respectable, honest, sensible, staid, and all that."

From her tone and turn of expression, it was sufficiently clear that Louisa had a playful reference to her admirer's character.

"You cannot use too strong expressions for me upon that head," returned Alice, with a serious warmth.

Louisa made a pause. At length she said, "Well, Alice, I will say what is in my head, because you always let me do so,—I never thought you cared so very much for Alfred Jenappe."

"Then you were mistaken, Louisa," replied her friend, frankly. "Perhaps it was the strong feeling I had, makes me think now so much of such visible and certain proofs of truth and goodness, which we have before our eyes in Mr. Davenport's case."

"Then you had no such proofs respecting Alfred Jenappe?" asked Louisa.

"I cannot quite say that," replied the other, "I should be utterly ashamed if it were entirely so. I believe I was put off my guard—I mean I was led to take things for granted from seeing him so strict and good....."

"Ah, I remember," cried Louisa, interrupting, "I remember how your cousins used to laugh at him for his particularity in going to church twice; that was almost the only thing I heard about him at that time; but I forgot it after other things happened."

"I do not forget it and other similar instances," ob-

served Alice, "because they are the best excuse I can make to myself for being, I fear, too soon satisfied. He was so good and religious in his ways, in spite of a different example in his family, and in those among whom I first met him, that I doubly and trebly valued his general principles and conduct, his justice, generosity, and kindness, which were all perpetually exercised in my service; and that, I fear, blinded me."

"Do not talk in that way, Alice," cried Louisa, warmly; "he is a base hypocrite, without a grain of true principle or feeling."

"No, Louisa, I do not allow that," replied Alice; "he is just what he was at that time, and I think I should have seen it if I had been allowed more time, or if I had been a mere spectator. He has warm and kind feelings of all sorts, and allows himself to be guided by them, and by them alone. They are not deep or lasting, so when new scenes and interests arise, new feelings take the place of the former ones."

"He is totally worthless and debased," said Louisa, "I do not like to hear you use softer terms."

"I will allow him a self deceiver, as all weak people must be more or less," said Alice, "but I will not allow him a hypocrite."

"You would allow a great deal more," returned Louisa, "if you and I changed places."

"Perhaps so," replied Alice; "personal acquaintance wonderfully softens one's severity, and I in turn will say, that if you had ever seen him and witnessed his spirited conduct and gentle manner, you would not use such hard terms without pain."

"Ah, Alice," cried Louisa, affectionately and sorrow-

fully, "I am a most thoughtless creature! I never considered your trouble half enough at the time. I thought it a good thing you had got free from such a good-for-nothing fellow; and now I can go on abusing him, without thinking of any pain I may give you! It is all your own fault, Alice. I am sure no creature but you would ever speak and think so gently of one who had behaved so detestably.—Oh, Alice," continued she, after a little pause, in her usual bright manner, "I am sure there must be some affectation in your feeling: I will *not* be guided by you, I *will* detest and abuse him as much as ever I can!"

"There would be affectation if I attempted to feel and to speak otherwise," said Alice, smiling faintly, "and I believe my feeling to be the most lasting and the safest. Anger is more likely to repent and relent if an opportunity occurred, than the cool—perhaps, Louisa, too contemptuous feeling which possesses me."

"Well, I am glad of that word and that look," said Louisa, "I only wish he could see and hear them; but your letter will convey something at any rate; he will see that he must give up the reversionary interest he so confidently calculated on in your affections."

"That was too absurd to imagine!" said Alice; "he is literally not the same to me. Thinking of him as now in India, I cannot recall one feeling of affection he possessed as Alfred in England. How can I? He is far less than a stranger to me."

There was a pause. Alice remarked, "We have got far from our discussion, Louisa."

"Not so very far, Alice," replied the other, "I have ten times the confidence in you now you have told me all

this. Besides, your last observations remind me of my own case."

"What, Mr. Davenport's change to *you* for good?" said Alice. "You do, then, allow the visible proofs of truth and goodness I appealed to just now?"

"He is certainly a fine, noble, straightforward character," observed Louisa, as she pondered over his qualities, "such uncompromising principles, such perplexing contrarieties, with such a grand unconscious simplicity; he is almost as amusing a study as you used to be, Alice; indeed as you are. But still I am provoked with him for this very thing. I meant *you* to be the only creature in the world that should ever have the impertinence to puzzle me. I do not see what right people have to seem so different from what they really are, and mislead and puzzle the simpler sort. I like transparent characters."

Alice laughed.

Louisa was conscious of the cause. "Ah, I know you choose to say I am not one of those," said she, colouring; "but," added she, archly, "you would have more reason if you found your charge upon my choice of my chief friend. However, Alice, you cannot deny that Mr. Davenport is enough to mislead keen observers of character at first."

"Or that all Mr. Davenport's observers are not infallible," added Alice.

"Well, let it be so," said Louisa; "I must confess to a change somewhere or other, else I should not now be having this conversation with you. But I often think of your theory as a sort of excuse for myself, that nothing brings out men's characters like a courtship."

"Or a refusal, I suppose you must add here."

"Ah," cried Louisa, "that is what I do not like to think of! Since I have known him better, and understand him more truly, I have often thought how lightly I treated him, and how little I thought of his feelings. I really believe I thought nothing at all about this part. I looked upon him as an old man, and a rich man, who at last began to think of marrying, and who considered his pretensions irresistible. But now I almost wonder how I could have taken the liberty to refuse him at all; much more how he could ever have chosen me out really for myself alone. Impossible as it now is, I can almost rather believe that he sought the match rather than me."

"And how far is your gratitude going to carry you?" asked Alice.

"Gratitude would not carry me far," cried Louisa, recovering her usual manner. "It is not gratitude, but a fear of mis-reading my duty, of following my own ways, that torments me. I could give up, yes, indeed I think I could, Alice, my own darling views and schemes, if only I was sure I was doing what was right."

"And what do you now mean by your own darling views and schemes?"

"Why, in the first place," replied Louisa, "I did not mean to choose to marry. I think it so much more useful, as well as so much more pleasant, to be single and independent all one's life; especially in my case. You know I like my own way, and I dare say I should soon quarrel with any body but you. But, really, it is not only that I think of comfort, I think beside I should be so much more useful. When I am twenty-one, you know, papa means to let me have a good part of my fortune to do what I please with; and then, while I live with papa,

I shall be richer than almost any body, because I have no claims, but just my dress, and I can spend the rest exactly as I please. Now I had always fancied that I should persuade papa to take a nice cottage in the country, at least for the summer half of the year, and then I should be among the poor, able to help them with money, and build school rooms, and engage teachers for them, and pension off the old and deserving,—Oh, and a thousand other schemes I had in my head, which must all be given up if I marry, and especially if I marry this man.”

“Then Mr. Davenport means to leave his country place, and give up all his various benevolences and charities?” enquired Alice.

“Oh, no, certainly not,” replied Louisa, “I never heard so.”

“Then you mean that you would refuse to share his plans?”

“Oh, Alice,” cried Louisa, “Mr. Davenport, or rather Mrs. Davenport, in a grand house, fortified with etiquette and formality, is very different from Louisa Robinson in such an unpretending cottage as I desire.”

“Well, if you feel your strength unequal to the position you would be called on to fill,” replied Alice, “I think you may be right to prefer a visionary life, such as you sketch, to the more sober and certain prospect of usefulness that is offered to you. Only do not flatter yourself you are choosing the useful.”

“I know very well my usefulness is at present ideal,” observed Louisa.

“Before you are one and twenty,” continued Alice, “your father may change his intention, or may not go

into the country, or your money even may make to itself wings."

"I allow all that possible, and not at all unlikely," said Louisa.

"Then we must put aside the plea as far as usefulness is concerned," observed Alice, "or rather consider it on Mr. Davenport's side. Certainly, as far as promise goes, there is a prospect of usefulness to you there, for you *know* you may arrange every thing according to your taste."

"Well, I believe it is a mistake to talk or think about usefulness," observed Louisa, after a pause; "I suppose those are the most useful who well fill the post they are intended to fill."

"Then you give up the argument on *usefulness*?" asked Alice, "and there is that on *comfort* left."

"I say I do not think it right to dwell upon that, Alice," replied her friend; "I know it would be more comfortable to my mind to remain single, but I know it would be selfish, and therefore very wrong, to act upon or even think of this, if every thing else were right."

"And what is every thing else?" asked Alice.

"Why first, that the man is respectable and all that," replied Louisa, laughing, "and secondly, that one does not hate him."

"Then now for your objections in this particular case: what have you to say against Mr. Davenport?"

"Ah, Alice," answered Louisa, "you should have asked me that question three months ago. I could have given you a list long enough to satisfy you; and though the catalogue has suffered in quantity, and each item in quality, I think it will still make a respectable show."

"First, I suppose you consider that his religion is not prominent enough," observed Alice.

"Why, I am better satisfied with that than I was," returned Louisa, "but I do confess I wish he was not as popular as he is; every body likes him, and speaks well of him. Now I do not think this ought to be the case with true Christians. Those words of our Saviour's must have some meaning in them. What do you say to this, Alice? Is there not something almost fearful when a man is rich and has all men to speak well of him?"

"No Christian can for a moment doubt or deny that it is a most perilous situation," returned Alice, "but you must say if you think possessions of any kind absolutely unlawful for a Christian. Do you think Mr. Davenport, for instance, ought to give up his estate?"

"I am sure I wish he would, if I ever had any thing to do with him!" exclaimed Louisa, fervently, "that would make a very great difference indeed."

"But do you think it wrong for a Christian to retain an inheritance or possess wealth?"

"I suppose I must not say it is wrong," replied Louisa, "but I feel that if Mr. Davenport would give up his estate, it would make a very great difference to me, and almost make up for his age."

"Well, and I was about to account his age a great recommendation to you in this respect," remarked Alice; "I was just about to say I thought it would make up for his wealth."

"How so?" enquired the other.

"Because he has had a trial. It is not like quite a young man, or like a man coming suddenly into property. He was twenty-five when he succeeded to his estate, and

there are eleven years on which you can exercise your criticism. No one has ever charged him with selfish expenditure, but many on the contrary wonder at his comparatively plain style of living. Others excuse him by saying," added she, archly, "that when he brings a lady home to Branstone, things will be different."

"If I have any voice in the matter—different, I hope, the other way," cried Louisa, warmly. "I know his principles are generous and noble, and I do not doubt their extending to this particular; but I do not think Christians should be as luxurious and comfortable as they are in those great houses, with every thing on a corresponding style."

"I feel I quite agree with you there, Louisa, not only in those great houses, but elsewhere; I think we are all too well off and too comfortable; yet it is very hard to escape comforts and luxuries which seem to follow us every where."

Alice spoke with great seriousness. Louisa was more struck than she expected, for she could not but call to mind how differently she had fared all her life from Alice, who seemed never to have had any thing fairly to be called a luxury at home, and who had always seemed to avoid any that came in her way elsewhere. Louisa continued, "You know I do not consider my natural home when I speak; of course I must live as papa does, and do a good deal as he pleases; but I should wish to have a very different home of my own, and be free from all the luxuries and etiquettes of society."

"It is a very difficult subject," observed Alice, "and one I do not pretend to decide upon, especially for another."

"You are always yourself, Alice!" cried Louisa, "and I trust you more for that confession than if you had opposed me to the utmost and proved me wrong. But now, supposing I allow that riches are not so much against a man as a husband, what do you say to a good name—universal popularity?"

"Why, I cannot pretend to deny his good name," returned her friend; "I suppose you yourself would not wish to have a man whose ill name was as confirmed a fact. But I can deny that his popularity is absolutely universal; though I know generally that he is highly respected, especially in his own circle and neighbourhood. I have however heard of many persons who do not speak well of him."

"Have you indeed?" cried Louisa, hopefully, and much pleased, "and what did they say?"

"Why, one called him a pharisee, another a humbug, and another a canting hypocrite."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Louisa; "how people mistake when they judge from the outside!"

"Then, you know, Mr. Bass had not a very good opinion of him," continued Alice, not heeding her friend's interruption.

"I never heard, what did he say?"

"He said," answered Alice, "that he considered Mr. Davenport an amiable bigot and a devout formalist."

"Ah, Alice," said Louisa, with a very different air from her former speech, "those sound hard words, but they express in part my doubts and my fears about him. I do think Mr. Davenport is too stiff and High Church in his religious opinions, and I wish in all his views he had more freedom and toleration. The worst of all is, Alice,

that you will not sympathize with me properly here, for I know in your heart you lean to these views yourself."

"I certainly do confess to approving Mr. Davenport's general principles, and admiring the mode of his stating his views, Louisa," replied her friend; "but this is no more than you knew before. You must however acquit him of the charge of being always well spoken of, after what I have told you."

"That is a satisfaction, certainly," returned Louisa, "but still if 'bigot' and 'formalist' are nothing but truth! what then?"

"Really I must leave you to settle that," replied Alice, smiling; "I think I have done my full duty by both parties, and I can assure you if Mr. Davenport had one whit more or less any of the good or bad qualities you and I believe him to have, I would not have said one word."

"And I am sure I would not have listened to a word," exclaimed Louisa, warmly.

"And I will add farther," continued Alice, "that if he had been less agreeable, or older, or if under some other external circumstances I could mention, I would not have taken the responsibility of discoursing about him."

"You are the best and most patient creature in the universe, Alice," cried Louisa, "and I only hope the end will satisfy you, whatever it is. As for me, I doubt if any thing can satisfy me, for one moment I wish one thing and the next another. Sometimes I long to run out of the way, and then I wish an end of some sort or other to be put to this suspense—for I feel it suspense, though I have no right to call it so."

"What! and take the liberty of refusing him again?"

"Oh, just as it happens," cried Louisa, laughing, "just according to the mood I happen to be in at the moment."

"Dear Louisa," said Alice, gravely, "you may talk what nonsense you please to me, but let me warn you against trifling with serious feelings, and your own right conduct. Take care to speak right words at the right time."

At this moment Mrs. Sidney's bell announced to Alice that her grandmamma had awoke, and was ready for a cup of tea. The back drawing-room had been made the invalid room, since it was an amusement often to Mrs. Sidney to hear what was going on, when she might not be equal to seeing visitors herself.

After a space, Alice returned. Louisa was sitting in an attitude of profound thought, and had not stirred during her friend's absence. "Well, Alice," said she, "there are a great many things to be glad of; matters might be worse: he might be ten years older, or he might be very plain! Oh, I had rather he were as old as he is than ten years younger, and horrid ugly! or, Alice, worse than all, he might be a widower—just think, a widower with a hundred children. You know, Alice, his friend, your cousin, has a family almost grown up, and Mr. Grove is but a few years older than the other. How lucky, to be sure, they have not changed places! Oh, what should I do!—what would become of poor me!"

"Perhaps such things would make a difference in your decision," replied Alice, smiling at her friend's distress; "certainly, under the supposition you suggest, I should say it would be as silly in a man to ask you as in you to accept."

"But it may be silly now."

"Well, it may be," returned Alice; "I would not advise you to do any thing you thought in the smallest degree silly; but at any rate it would be sillier then."

"There is one very fortunate circumstance," observed Louisa, presently, "and that is our appearance. You know a year ago I was taken for two and twenty, and he looks four, or perhaps five years younger than he is. I dare say if his age were not so well known, he would not be taken for more than thirty, and that makes only seven years difference."

"And I dare say you can make out the same equality as to mind and habits," said Alice, laughing; "surely these are fully as important as appearances."

"Now you are going to take up the other side, Alice," said Louisa, "and you had much better do so, for I am sure I do not care half enough for him."

"Then I am sure you had much better not think any thing more of him or the affair, but persuade your father to return home, or come and stay here with me."

Alice now summoned Louisa, who had latterly began to be rather a favourite of Mrs. Sidney's, to the invalid's room; and if Louisa was desirous of still conversing upon Mr. Davenport she was gratified, for Mrs. Sidney was unusually free and fluent in his praises.

CHAPTER IV.

WHATEVER Louisa thought, she did not follow Alice's advice. She did not try to persuade her father to return home, nor did she retire more than before to the seclusion of Mrs. Sidney's sick room. Perhaps she could not conveniently do either ; for just at the moment relations of her family came down to Brighton, and she was constantly called upon to join their parties, both at home and abroad. It happened not unfrequently that Mr. Davenport was included in these parties, which was the most natural thing in the world, as he was acquainted with all who composed them. One of these expeditions was to the Dyke. It was in returning from this late one afternoon, about a fortnight after the last mentioned events, exactly four months since Mr. Davenport made his first offer, that it was proposed to leave the carriages and take a turn on the chain pier. All consented but Alice, who had been that day, most unusually, of the party, and was anxious to return to her grandmother. The rest, after sauntering about some time, bent their steps homewards. On their ascent from the pier, owing to some change in the party, Louisa found Mr. Davenport was her companion. This was not unusual nor unpleasant to her. She particularly enjoyed Mr. Davenport's conversation, especially in a *tête-a-tête* ; but she foresaw the end of the walk would bring with it a dilemma, and as she listened

and replied, she could not help occasionally wondering if Mr. Davenport was aware of the situation he would presently find himself in.

They deposited the largest portion of the party at their home by the way side, and proceeded on, themselves and one other couple, a brother and sister, who would also shortly reach their abode. They did so, and took leave. The young gentleman was but a youth, and it never entered his head that there might be an awkwardness in the circumstances of the pair thus left together ; and if it had, what could he have done ? The young lady stepped back to send some message to Mrs. Bligh, Mr. Davenport's sister, concerning some music, after which Louisa and her companion turned from the door.

"Your sister keeps up her music, though she is married," observed Louisa.

"Do you expect marriage to be the signal for giving up all that is ornamental and delightful ?" asked Mr. Davenport, with a certain tone of braving the subject.

Louisa was provoked with herself for having most unintentionally given rise to such a one, by a remark which she made merely to avoid a silence. However she replied, "I should never *expect* it, only I see it so generally the case among my acquaintance."

"And you acquiesce in dooming husbands' ears to an abstinence from sweet household melody ?"

"I do not doom," said Louisa ; "but if such is the fact, I should be inclined to consider the husband as the original cause of the deprivation. If he continued to admire and enjoy, surely there would not be such a summary end to sweet household melody in his own new made home."

Mr. Davenport repeated the lines of Crabbe :—

“ Now to her music would the wife repair,
To which he listened once with eager air.

• • • • •

But now the sweet melodious tones were sent,
From the struck chords, and none cared where they went.
Full well we know that many a favourite air,
That charms a party, fails to charm a pair.

• • • • •

She looked around—a husband wrapped in gloom
Stalk’d careless, listless, up and down the room.

“ That, I suppose, represents your mind’s picture,” continued he.

“ Perhaps so,” replied Louisa, amused and a little piqued by his coolness.

“ You think, I suppose, all men—husbands particularly—given to change?” pursued he, in an enquiring tone.

“ If I judge by reality, yes,” returned Louisa, “ if by imagination, no ; but it seems I am forbidden to do the latter.”

Louisa had the satisfaction of perceiving Mr. Davenport a little thrown back by this allusion to some of his own sentiments.

“ I will give you a dispensation,” said he, smiling, “ if imagination chances to be more true than reality.”

“ Or more flattering to the vanity of men,” added Louisa.

“ Then you think men more given to change than women?”

The question was asked most simply, and though Louisa saw and believed it to be so done, she felt provoked

with herself, and annoyed beyond expression. It gave such an unexpected and such an unwelcome turn to her thoughts. "If he said it with any meaning," thought she, "I would prove that one woman, at any rate, is not given to change." And this was such a moment as Alice had forewarned her of. She thought of her friend, though she replied readily, "You must state what change—change for good, or change for bad."

"No, no," cried Mr. Davenport, "that is not fair, you are eluding the question; we cannot call it change for good to love and admire that less which was once worthy of our love and admiration—at least *I* do not."

Mr. Davenport spoke the last words much too gravely for Louisa's taste. How glad she was they had almost reached her father's door. She answered, however, without hesitation, "And now I think *you* are eluding the question. Great teachers of morals should not appeal to themselves."

Mr. Davenport paused; this remark seemed to him intended to put a check on the conversation. They walked a few steps in silence. *Uncomfortable* is far too light a word to apply to the feelings of both parties. Louisa was greatly struck by the sudden silence, which somehow or other she could not summon her usual readiness to break. Her thoughts flew again to Alice. "Ah," thought she, "Alice warned me to take care of my words; what have I said?"

Mr. Davenport soon recovered his usual tone of mind. He was not one to act blindly, or by guess. He had had, it was true, a slight reviving hope, which late days had fostered, suddenly struck to the ground. But he followed his own correct instinct—the instinct of principle. His

hand was now on the lock of Mr. Robinson's door, and he turned to his companion as he half opened it,—“*Louisa,*” said he, looking very grave, “*I have not changed ; I never shall change, I believe, on one subject. I am in the same mind as I was this day four months.*”

Louisa once more thought of her friend Alice, and would have strengthened herself to say what was right, if that was necessary ; but Mr. Davenport's grave countenance fixed upon her, helped her as it could not have done, had they been walking, as just now, side by side. “*But I am not quite in the same mind,*” said she, with a gravity very troublesome to her ; and perceiving Mr. Davenport's countenance considerably relax, she added, in her own natural manner, with a brilliant smile, “*I think you less prejudiced, less stiff, and less disagreeable than I did this day four months.*”

Mr. Davenport had resolved that Louisa's reply should direct his movements, whether he should take leave of her at the door, or whether he should follow her up stairs. He did the latter.

CHAPTER V.

BRANSTONE Park, Mr. Davenport's place, was within ten minutes' walk of the village of Chadleigh. This village was small and compact, but remarkable for containing several houses of the better sort. The climate of Chadleigh was fine, and the surrounding country very lovely. These, with other recommendations, had preserved this spot from the changes or depopulation among the better sort of houses now so generally the lot of similar places. Mr. Grove, the rector, had been there about three years. His had been a very different lot from Mr. Davenport's. On slender means he had married early, and though not many years older than his friend, had a large family, some nearly grown up.

The living of Chadleigh was a very poor one, and when it fell vacant Mr. Davenport had scrupled much as to offering it to Mr. Grove; almost the more, since he was tolerably certain that his friend would accept it without hesitation. This was actually the case, and three years before the present time, on the death of Mr. Bolton, the former incumbent, Mr. Grove and his youthful family took up their abode in the parsonage.

Mr. Grove's marriage had been one of those which may strictly be denominated a love match; not that it was against the declared opinion of any of the authorities on

either side, but there was a sufficient degree of youthful imprudence about it to have justified the many grave looks, sage pieces of advice, and sagacious predictions, that accompanied it, had it taken any inauspicious turn. The gentleman was three and twenty, and the lady two years his junior. Her family was one of birth and good connexions, and she was considered to have thrown herself away, and as having done little credit to the family. She and her husband had never been amongst her relations since their marriage. Their engagements at home and the care of a young family amply accounted for this. However intercourse between the parties was by no means suspended.

Mr. and Mrs. Horace Grove, then, married and settled down to a country curacy and pupils. She had a little property of her own to help, and he had the eventual prospect of some two hundreds a year. They certainly contrived much better than their friends had anticipated. They never once applied for assistance. On the contrary, Mr. Grove's means were equal to receive as many of his wife's connexions as chanced to be inclined to visit them from time to time ; and that—it was reported by an aunt who first ventured to reconnoitre the new home of the young couple,—not in a shabby style, but with an air that suited well with the lady's extraction.

On Mr. Bolton's death, his widow and family had succeeded in obtaining one of the very pretty cottages in the village of Chadleigh, and had resided constantly in the place, which had endeared itself to them by many years of comfort and ease. Mr. Davenport had been consulted upon the scheme. He did not fall into it as readily as those who proposed it ; that is, he mentioned many draw-

backs to a plan which at first sight might seem unexceptionable. Mrs. Bolton, however, felt the advantages greater than their opposites, and decided upon taking a long lease of the Close.

There were other families of the same stamp, both at Chadleigh, and the neighbouring hamlet of Stockfield; but only one has relation to the present history. This was that of a Miss Hale, who resided in a house called the Hollies. This lady was of mature years, and lived alone, though she was constantly visited by nephews and nieces of all ages and names, whose train seemed interminable. At this time she had a brother and sister of the name of Frampton staying with her.

On the afternoon with which this part of the history begins, Mrs. Bolton, with her son Lawrence and one of her daughters, made a call upon Mrs. Grove at the parsonage. "I come to tell you our disappointment," said Mrs. Bolton, as she greeted her neighbour on the lawn;—"not arrived yet!—their return put off till Monday."

"I thought you would be sure to know that, by the bells not ringing," returned Mrs. Grove.

"There are to be no bells," said Mrs. Bolton. "I hear the bride has an objection to all such customs, and wishes no fuss at all to be made about her."

"Brides will scarcely escape that," observed Lucy Grove, with a very bright air; "especially such a bride as Mrs. Davenport; she seems to be formed to supply a neighbourhood with food for conversation, far beyond the legitimate space allotted to the reign of a bride."

"People will talk," observed Mrs. Bolton, "we cannot prevent that, and certainly I am at a loss to know what to expect. I am half afraid poor dear Mr. Davenport has

been taken in after all. With all his sense, I often think he has not much discernment; and how often one sees those sensible men blinded by a pretty face. It is a great mistake for men of property to marry late in life. Disparities are terrible risks."

"I mean this match to be an exception to all general rules, Mrs. Bolton," cried Lucy; "and what is more, I mean to be pleased and satisfied with Mrs. Davenport, whatever she is, and whatever she does, for one year at least."

"You will have a great deal to look over," observed Margaret Bolton, "if we may at all trust report: but we shall know more presently. We are just going to call at the Hollies, and shall hear what Esther Frampton has to say, and if she confirms her brother's account. She arrived last night,—Adams brought us in the news as late as ten o'clock."

"The Framptons live very near Brinksworth, Mrs. Davenport's brother's place, I think?" asked Mrs. Grove.

"Yes," replied Margaret. "Mr. Frampton has something to do with Lord Major's estate,—Lord Major, you know, is Mrs. Robinson's father,—it is a situation of great consequence and responsibility, and he is acquainted with all the family and their affairs. It seems that Mr. Robinson, or Jack Robinson, as he is called there, is not much thought of. He is a person of no connexion, and this sister, Louisa, now Mrs. Davenport, was there last year."

"It was on that visit that young Mr. Frampton made his report, was it not?" said Mrs. Grove.

"Yes; but Esther knows, or at least will say more than her brother," replied Margaret.

"Yet I am sure he has said a good deal, and spread his

accounts far and wide," said Lucy. "The Heathcotes, who you know are eight miles off, re-told us some of Mr. Frampton's stories, and said they heard them from the Moores, who are several miles beyond."

"There is plenty to be said," continued Mrs. Bolton ; "there seems no doubt that Miss Robinson was a very eccentric odd young woman. Lady Georgina's kindness, they say, was without bounds, but she could make nothing of her sister-in-law, who made herself so disliked by the neighbourhood, that it was quite a relief to Lady Georgina to get rid of her."

"There was one hope for us in Mr. Frampton's report," observed Mrs. Grove, who was arranging some creeping plants according to a fancy of her own ; "he said Miss Robinson was liked by the poor in the village."

"And by the clergyman's family, mamma," added Lucy, "so there is reasonable hope of the prosperity of my year's attachment."

"It is not very hard for a rich young lady like Miss Robinson to become popular among the poor," observed Mrs. Bolton, smiling.

"Money does not always purchase good-will," returned Mrs. Grove, "but if it did in this case, we gain from it the assurance of Mr. Davenport, at least not being thwarted in his kindness and liberality."

"Well, that is very true," observed Mrs. Bolton, "it is our duty to hope for the best, I am sure I am not going to set myself against dear Mr. Davenport's wife ; and I shall make a point of giving the bright view of the case wherever I hear ill-natured things said. It does not signify what we say here, in the palace of truth," added she, smiling, "where each person's words stand only on their

own merits ; but the world in general is sadly ill-natured, and you see so many choose to be offended with Mr. Davenport, for going out of his own neighbourhood for a wife, and then bringing home such a young creature. As I heard that Mrs. Cottrill said, 'As if a chit of nineteen could bear any comparison with the fine young women round about Branstone !' and I myself confess, I do think the neighbourhood has a certain claim upon a man of property."

"I am not so sure of the wisdom or comfort of connexion between near neighbours," observed Mrs. Grove.

"Near neighbours !" interrupted Margaret, "mamma said nothing about *near* neighbours. I cannot think who you suppose she could mean."

"I meant none in particular," replied Mrs. Grove, in a tone rather in contrast to the younger lady's ; "I had such families in my eye as those I suppose Mrs. Cottrill alluded to."

"Oh," cried Margaret, laughing, "we know the family to which Mrs. Cottrill alluded !"

Shortly after this Mrs. Bolton proposed moving, and she left with her son. Lucy was Margaret's instructress in some fancy work at home. It was standing still for a lesson, and Margaret had been planning that Lucy should accompany them to the Close for the rest of the morning, calling with them by the way upon Miss Hale. Lucy was in no wise reluctant to make this call ; she had a wholesome youthful longing to hear all that was to be heard of the new Mrs. Davenport, and was hoping for better reports from the sister than the brother ; yet she shrunk from introducing or encouraging conversation, dreading the demolition of her airy castles of a Uto-

pia at Branstone, or rather of the Utopia already there, which had so well satisfied her as it stood before. She could not deny to herself that she had her fears: she had heard of the age of the bride with a strong feeling of surprise, if not alarm. She could not quite conceal from herself that until she was *sure* of the wife, the husband had lost some, perhaps only a little, but still some, of the respect which, as Mr. Davenport, he had hitherto commanded. She had always looked upon Mr. Davenport as her father's friend, though there was some years difference in actual age, and it was a startling and a new idea to find him lowered through his marriage into a contemporary, as it were, of her father's children. Yet Mr. Davenport was so clear-sighted, so simple, and so true, she was sure he was to be trusted, whatever appearances were, or whatever report said. His letter also to her father was just what it should be. However, with more thought of Miss Frampton at the Hollies, than the fancy work at the Close, and with some agitation of hope and fear, the enthusiastic young lady ran up stairs for her bonnet, in order to accompany Margaret.

When they reached the Hollies, they found the party in full flow of talk on the bride. Scarcely could time be spared for greetings, though it was a year since Miss Frampton had been at Chadleigh. "How fortunate that you should come here just now," cried Margaret, as she greeted her friend, "but pray go on; tell us all you can!"

"Oh, I could give you a book full of anecdotes!" returned Esther; "we are so near both Lord Major's and Brinksworth, that we know all that goes on. Besides the young Majors hunt and shoot a great deal with my

brothers, and are very intimate, so that we have our news always from head quarters."

"Well, then, give us an idea of our bride," said Margaret.

"What, her personal appearance?" returned the other.

"Come, I am the best hand at that," cried young Frampton, stepping forwards; "gentlemen are the only real judges of beauty; and Esther shall afterwards tell you the colour of hair, eyes, shawls, and ribbons, and detail the number of gowns, what they cost, and all the rest of it."

"That would not be a very arduous task," observed Esther, laughing.

"Except," interposed her brother, "as I rather suspect, Miss Robinson did not condescend to treat us poor commonalty with her best gowns, but kept them to cut a dash among the lords and ladies. She's not much used to this style of society, I imagine, so that would be natural enough."

"She was unpopular enough among the gentry, however," said Miss Frampton, laughing, "and I doubt if she would show them any such mark of respect, any more than the rest of us. No, I rather think she is universally high, and thinks no one good enough to talk to."

"I thought we were going to hear about her beauty," observed Lucy, "what does Mr. Frampton say to that?"

"Oh, she's handsome—pretty, rather—decidedly pretty," replied he, "but that makes her all the worse in my humble opinion—such a regular take in! I am no professed admirer of your beauties, but if one sees a fine tall handsome young woman, with a cut of the grand about her features and figure, even though she may be of no

family, one is not surprised at a spice of *hauteur*; but one's pride is not a little roused to find airs and graces in a little simple looking girl, in a coarse straw bonnet, with a bit of a shawl on ! I call it a regular take in !”

Esther laughed heartily at her brother's warmth, and Lucy joined a little, reminding Mr. Frampton that he had engaged to leave dress to his sister, and confine himself to beauty.

“ I fear, ladies, you will think me a Goth,” observed Mr. Frampton, “ when I declare I do not admire beauty. I think beauty so secondary to manners and disposition in a lady, that I should scarcely notice it. I had rather a girl be plain than proud. Be assured, ladies,” continued he, smiling, “ whatever gentlemen tell *you*, in their hearts they prefer behaviour to beauty. In my humble opinion, there is no such drawback to a young lady as pride. I do detest and abhor pride, from the very bottom of my soul !”

“ But somebody said that Miss Robinson was liked by the poor in the place,” said Lucy, hoping to elicit some facts, “ was it so ? and how came she to have any thing to do with the villagers ?”

“ There's no accounting for the whims of a fine lady ; particularly a fine young lady—ha ! ha !” said Mr. Frampton, “ but I have often observed that your *grandees*, who are as proud as Lucifer, can be very sweet and humble to those avowedly beneath them ; but this is not what I call humility. Besides, who's this Miss Robinson, to give herself the airs of *grandees* ?—a mere plebeian family—the sister of Jack Robinson, a man who is the butt of the county !”

Mr. Frampton here walked about, having worked him-

self into a frame which needed that expression of feeling. His sister laughed, and went to him, saying, "Now go, Fred, to your fishing and get cool in the river, if by no other means;" adding, after she had succeeded in shutting the door upon him, "Fred has such a fine generous spirit, he does, as he says, hate from his very heart all finery and pride. He always says those of really noble birth have the least pride; but then, you know, he is so very high in his notions!"

"Well, now, Esther, pray do you give us the history of Miss Robinson's visit," said Margaret.

"Then now for a long story!" exclaimed the young lady, settling herself. "Well, you know, Lady Georgina is a great invalid; she really is: it is not fine lady illness; she feels the difference of air and climate immediately, and sometimes when she goes out for a few days, Mr. Robinson is obliged to return with her the next morning, though all the neighbourhood has been invited to meet her. Well, her constant delicacy prevented her from asking this sister of her husband's to visit them; but last year, when Miss Robinson was, she thought, of a proper age to be introduced, she made a great effort, and had her down for a couple of months. Lady Georgina was very delicate about saying a word, but mamma heard that she had said no one could tell the effort it was to her, or what she went through during the whole visit. She had had the generous notion of settling Miss Robinson well, and for that purpose visited a great deal more than she had ever done. Miss Robinson did not feel the kindness at all, and behaved very ungratefully. She at length actually was so ill-bred as to tell Lady Georgina that she had ten times rather sit at home with her of an evening, and talk or sing

to her—for, you know, she sings beautifully—than go to any of the parties that Lady Georgina had so set her heart upon. Lady Georgina was so mortified and distressed to hear her say this, as you may suppose; she said it cost her a night's rest—only think! Then, you know, Miss Robinson behaved so odd and eccentric when she did go out. She had not manners fit for her society—no discretion, they said. She made such strange remarks, and did not make the most of herself. I know that Lady Georgina was heartily ashamed and vexed at her losing the prospect of a very fine match, by her wilful speeches and ways.”

“Lady Georgina need no longer regret that now, I suppose,” remarked Lucy.

“Your Mr. Davenport is a very respectable man, and all that, I dare say,” returned Esther, “but he is only a commoner; and think what a thing to offend the Majors and all their grand connexions!”

Lucy, who was in Mr. Davenport's interest, rather than in the Majors' and their connexions', could not say any thing sympathetic. She continued, “But how came Miss Robinson to know the curate and his family, and be so much among the poor of the place?”

“Lady Georgina had begun that summer to notice the clergyman, and to call in upon some of the poor people, which she had never had health to do ever since she had been at Brinksworth; so while Miss Robinson was with her, she naturally employed her as a deputy, and transacted all matters of charity through her.”

“I guessed as much,” said Mrs. Bolton; “Miss Robinson's popularity is easily accounted for, as I said; any body might get popular enough here with a Lady Georgina's purse in the hand.”

"It was not Lady Georgina's money, nor much money at all, that made Miss Robinson popular, I believe," returned Esther; "Miss Robinson was certainly kind to the poor; she had a taste for visiting them more than the great people about, and the poor in turn spoke well of her. We used to wonder what she could do for them, they talked in such a way of her, and we found she scarcely ever gave them money. Then she got very intimate with Mr. Davis, the clergyman, and his family, and they are perfectly in raptures with her. No wonder, poor things! they are badly enough off, and Miss Robinson was always making little coats and frocks for the children. Lady Georgina never liked to see her working at such things; she said it was not like a young lady."

"None of these things betray the sort of pride you spoke of," observed Lucy.

"No, but she *was* proud and high; every body said so," replied Esther. "She was so eccentric and odd, however, there was no making her out. Every body said so. She was not gay, for she did not like parties; yet she would play and dance with the children, and indeed is to this day a favourite with them at Brinksworth. She was not religious, because she never gave away tracts, or talked in that way to the poor; and besides, she liked Mr. Davis, who is never considered a serious man; so that nobody could say what she was. Fred, who is very witty, used to call her neither fish, flesh, nor fowl."

"Well, she may be very good, and yet none of these," said Lucy, laughing.

"Fred would not allow that, I am sure," said Esther; he says all that is good for any thing is ranged under those three classes."

"Then what does your brother say to fruits?" asked Lucy. "Oh, I am sure we shall be clever enough at Chadleigh to find her parallel in a fruit!"

"Fred then would say a lemon," said Esther.

"Or a prickly pear," added Margaret, laughing, "that seems best to suit his account. But come," added she, "let's go home, and talk things over while Lucy Grove teaches me my fringe. Helen and Eliza are quite wild to know about our visit."

The other young ladies obeyed the summons, and the trio proceeded on their way, leaving the elder ladies together. On their road, they passed Frederick Frampton and young Bolton, who had gone out together. The former darted forward, and presenting a small packet to Margaret, begged her to convey it to her sister Helen, saying he should do himself the honour to wait upon her in the afternoon, and enquire the result of their wager.

Esther stepped back to speak a few words to her brother, which gave Margaret the opportunity of remarking to her companion, "What an agreeable young man Mr. Frampton is! I did not expect any thing of the sort,—so gentlemanly, and such very good manners."

"I do not like his speaking so strong against Mrs. Davenport, though," replied Lucy; "it is a serious thing to prejudice a whole neighbourhood against any one, and a stranger too in her place; I think it thoughtless."

"Thoughtless!" cried Margaret, laughing, "why it is only what every body does! Who is there, I should like to know, who does not speak of their neighbours, and find fault with them if they do not please? The fault is to say what is not true."

"Well, you know, the faults he found were more mat-

ters of opinion, than matters of fact, and if he happens not to have seen enough to form a correct judgment, he is publishing what is not true."

"Oh, he has done no harm," cried Margaret; "I hope we do not pin our faith upon Mr. Frederick Frampton; he says Mrs. Davenport is high and lofty, and gives herself airs and graces; we shall see her in a few days, and if she is not, why then she is not, and we shall be all the better pleased with her."

"Yes, but if her manner happen to be reserved, or if she is timid and shy, like poor Janet," returned Lucy, "then many of us will be confirmed in an impression which perhaps will never be got rid of; and it may make even Mr. Davenport quite different among us from what he has ever been."

"Well, on the other hand," continued Margaret, "he says she is hot and peppery, will put any neighbourhood in a flame, and make every place too hot to hold her."

"So then, if her manner is lively rather than timid," said Lucy, "she will be accounted a fury; so, you see, she is in a net, she cannot escape."

"Oh, Lucy," cried Margaret, "if you begin at eighteen to trouble your head about all the 'ifs' and 'may bes' there are in the world, what will become of you by the time you are my age?"

"Well, I certainly do not like so much gossip," said Lucy.

"I am sure, then, it is lucky you are not in my place," said Margaret, laughing, "with six or seven constantly in the house, who live upon nothing else from morning to night! Then Stephen and his wife every week bring a fresh importation from Newton, and Elizabeth and her

husband from their large neighbourhood ; not to speak of letters, and the carrier, and the tradespeople from Fore-mouth, and our daily visitors, and all their friends, neighbours and countrymen ; why the Hollies alone, with Miss Hale and her tribe of nephews and nieces, would supply in one week gossip enough for life for any one reasonable individual."

" Well, I do not think I should like it," said Lucy, " it would keep me in an incessant whirl ; I don't think I should know one thing from another."

" Why you must have the same at home," said Margaret, " you are not kept in the nursery now. You live in the same place as we do, know the same people, and hear the same things. I cannot think what you mean, Lucy !"

Lucy felt vexed with herself, at she knew not what, but Esther that moment running up to them, she said nothing.

" Oh, Esther," continued Margaret, " I am glad you have come ; here is Lucy in a melancholy mood. I fancy she means to take a leaf out of Emma's book, and walk through the world like a ghost with its eyes shut, or bask on a cushioned sofa all day, sighing and pining over romantic tales and visions."

" Well, I always said Emma was like my cousin Lizzy," said Esther, " though I hoped these fancies would go off in a year or so, and she would become like the rest of you."

" Oh, no," replied Margaret, laughing, " depend upon it, Emma will always be Emma. She is become worse now than the Emma you knew last year. She does just as she pleases ; sometimes is not up, or down stairs till noon ; sometimes is out of doors before sun-rise. We

none know how she employs herself; I suspect writing verses, for I know she fancies herself a poetess. She takes no part whatever in what is going on around her, and is, in fact, just, Lucy, what you must be if you go on with your present views."

"I have no views," cried Lucy, colouring at the attack, "and the habits of my family will preserve me from what you dread for the present."

"Ah, I know," replied Margaret, "your mamma keeps you all so strict. I am sure I should dislike that more than our gossip."

Lucy now found a reason for feeling vexed with herself, as she had done, for what she had said. She had not had the least intention of her remarks being personal, but Margaret had so taken them, giving her last speech the tone of a retort. Lucy began to think she must imitate Emma in silence, if in nothing else. But Lucy must go through a great deal before she could become in any one respect like Emma. Their natures, habits, and discipline, were as opposite as any two individuals of the same age could well be.

CHAPTER VI

THE party had now reached the Close. Margaret was greeted by her sisters, Helen and Eliza, with enquiries concerning her visit at Branstone, and great was the disappointment expressed at the result. The sight of Miss Frampton was in some degree an alleviation, and all the party were summoned by Helen to the drawing-room for "a nice cosy talk, with no interruptions;" she desired any visitors to be shown into the dining-room, saying Eliza could go to them.

"You will have a visitor soon, however," said Margaret to her sister, remembering the packet, "who will not be put off by a deputy," and she produced the little parcel.

"Oh, I know!" cried Helen, seizing it, "it is the fly! now for it!" and she opened it.

It was a small glass box, so fixed that it could not be opened. Helen very intently pored over its contents, while her sister laughingly made remarks upon the intimacy that seemed springing up so suddenly between the parties.

"I can assure you there was a singular devotion of manner, as he presented me the packet," said Margaret, looking round to see that the sister of the gentleman was at a safe distance.

"Nonsense, Margaret!" cried Helen, "devotion to *you*,

if to any body. His present devotion has been given to this fly, if he has made it," added she, still examining the contents of the box, "for I declare I cannot tell."

"Then he has foiled you, at any rate," cried Margaret ; "but really, Helen, I should be ashamed to confess as much after all your boasting last night."

"Well, but I *can* tell very well presently," continued Helen ; "it is only that I would be quite sure, which in fact I am, and was the first moment. I expected he would bring me one of his own made flies, and not a real one, that was all."

The fly, which was one for fishing, was now examined by all but Emma, who had retreated to her sofa immediately after rising to greet the two visitors. Though the Miss Boltons had generally little or no reserve in expressing their opinions and feelings, the presence of one who would naturally convey all to her brother, acted as a restraint, and Margaret's remark, "It is Helen's affair, I have nothing to do with it," was considered the best that could be made, and none committed themselves farther.

Helen alone pronounced decidedly that the fly was a real one ; adding, "it was hard to take her in, she was not one to be caught with such a bait."

Emma just took interest enough in what was passing to observe, that without a glance at the object of dispute, she would decide against her sister, and say the fly was manufactured.

"And pray why ?" asked Helen.

"Because Mr. Frampton looks made to take you in, and you made to swallow his bait, Helen," said Emma, as she re-opened her book.

Helen coloured at this remark, and was angry. Lucy

was annoyed. The rest were used to the sort of thing ; and Esther said good-humouredly, " It is at any rate a compliment to Fred's talents, though I am sure he is of too generous a nature to take in any lady."

" Well, I confess myself taken in," said Helen, " if this is not a real fly ; but I am not one to be twice duped !"

" Duped !" cried Esther, " nobody thought of duping you, least of all Fred, who is too much the gentleman, I am sure. He told me you dared him to deceive you."

" To be sure she did," said Eliza, " and they made a wager upon it."

" For my part, I think Helen wishes to lose, by her guess," observed Emma, drily, " for however the fly looks, you may be sure it is made by him."

During this discussion, Lucy had established herself and her frame, and was beginning to teach Margaret her fringe stitch. Soon the party joined this group, and took up the subject which had been broken in upon.

" Well," cried Helen, " I do think it is a shame for people to break their engagements, and disappoint a whole neighbourhood."

" There is the use of bells," said Margaret, " if Mrs. Davenport had not been so ridiculous as to countermand them, we should not have had this disappointment."

Here followed a long disquisition on the bells not ringing ; much was repeated that had been said in the village, and general dissatisfaction was predicted, in consequence of the bells being silenced. At length Lucy took an opportunity of enquiring, " Are you sure that Mrs. Davenport has interfered about it ? it does not seem likely, and we have heard nothing of it."

"Somebody said so," replied Margaret, "and I find it is believed in the village."

"The new Mrs. Davenport is not likely to have the bells ever rung for her own sake, if this is the case," said Helen; "certainly she has begun by putting us out."

"Then why did you not do as Mrs. Grove advised?" asked Emma,— "wait till you saw Mrs. Davenport at church on Sunday."

"One likes not to be remiss or rude, especially to an old friend like Mr. Davenport," replied Margaret; "you, Emma, know nothing of etiquettes."

"Nonsense, Margaret, etiquettes!" murmured Emma.

"Well, it is all best," said Margaret, "for now we hear first all Esther Frampton's histories; come, Esther, go on. We were so good-natured as to put off these stories for you to hear, you ungrateful girls."

Helen was restored to her equanimity in a moment.

"Well, I will tell you about Wrigglesworth, first," pursued Esther, "for that shows how perverse and unmanageable Miss Robinson was. Lady Georgina was all kindness, and had her sister-in-law's interest always at heart, so she thought it would be an excellent introduction to get her to Wrigglesworth."

"Wrigglesworth!" cried some of the auditors, "but what is Wrigglesworth?"

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Esther, laughing, "don't you know Wrigglesworth? how odd to be sure! Why Wrigglesworth is the dowager Lady Fowler's place; you know her, of course, from the London papers. She is, and has been long, the leading fashionist in the metropolis; and she can do any thing she pleases for young ladies."

"What sort of things?" asked Lucy.

"Oh, every body knows," replied the other; "introduce them and establish them suitably; I don't know how many young ladies she has not got off. You must have heard; she is as famous for this as the old duchess they talk so much of. There were first her own six daughters, then I don't know how many nieces, one after another; and now, till her grand-children and great nieces are grown up, she keeps her hand in with young friends of good connexions.

Lucy laughed. "You do not really mean that, do you?" said she, seeing Miss Frampton did not smile.

"To be sure; every body knows it."

"But how can this lady make people like each other?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Esther; "I don't know really how she manages the gentleman—that is her great cleverness; the lady is easy enough."

"The lady easy enough!" cried Lucy, "how so?"

"Why, you know Lady Fowler always secures rank or wealth, or both, sufficient to satisfy any reasonable young lady."

"You are a great deal worse than you were last year, Esther," said Emma; "do you think all young ladies are to be caught by such baits?"

"Oh, you are romantic; I never talk to you, you know," said Esther, laughing, "I speak only of young ladies of a mere common nature."

"Then was Miss Robinson romantic?" asked Lucy, hoping to turn the discourse, and longing to get at the story.

"Oh, nobody can say what she is," replied Esther.

"We know she was ready enough to marry at any rate," said Margaret.

"And to marry a man of property," continued Helen.

"And one old enough to be her father," added Eliza.

"No, no, Eliza," said more than one, for Mr. Davenport had not hitherto been accounted in that class.

"But now, Miss Frampton," said Lucy, "do tell us what Miss Robinson did or said."

"That is what I am coming to, if they will let me," continued the narrator. "Why, you know, Lady Georgina told Miss Robinson to be as obliging as possible to Lady Fowler, and took her over for a morning call; she warned her to say nothing to offend her ladyship, who was very touchy and soon put out; and to make all safe and sure, she told Miss Robinson the reason. Well, would you believe it! Miss Robinson took the very first opportunity that occurred of differing with her ladyship; and not a single thing did Lady Fowler say, but Miss Robinson contradicted it point blank!—so very rude and ill-bred you know."

"I suppose you do not know what they talked of?"

"Oh, yes, I heard," replied Esther, "if I could remember—let me see—first, Lady Georgina admired the Park, and Lady Fowler mentioned an alteration there was going to be, and asked Miss Robinson about it. Miss Robinson quite differed, and said she liked to see a road from the windows of a house, and would not give up her opinion for all both the ladies could do. Lady Georgina tried to give her a hint by a look, and calling her taste cockney: but Miss Robinson never took any hints, and made bad worse, by standing to it that her taste was not at all cockney;—so ill-bred, you know."

"Yes, and ignorant beside," added Helen, "for every body knows that the Londoners are obliged to have carts

and carriages pass before their houses all day long ; and what is that but Cockney, I should like to know ?”

“ And what was the end of this visit ?” asked Margaret.

“ Why the end was,” replied Esther, “ that Lady Fowler quite disliked Miss Robinson, and instead of asking her to come and stay, as she had been inclined, she advised Lady Georgina privately, as a friend, to get rid of her as soon as she could. She called her an intractable, eccentric girl, and quite established her character in our neighbourhood, by saying so to every body. So this, you see, was what Miss Robinson got by her perverseness.”

“ How delightful !” exclaimed Eliza, “ how delightful to know so much of what such great people do and say ! Did Lady Georgina tell you all this herself ?”

“ No, not exactly Lady Georgina,” replied Esther, “ but my authority is quite as good. It comes *from* her ladyship, nobody else was present.”

“ Her ladyship’s maid probably,” said Helen, “ the very best of authorities always.”

Esther paused and looked at Helen, who still held the doubtful fly in her hand, and was now bending over and re-examining it. Not being able to decide upon the tone of Helen’s last remark, Esther merely slightly coloured, and turning to Eliza, replied, “ Oh, I could give you a thousand such instances of Miss Robinson’s odd ways ; nobody could endure her.”

“ But you said she was liked in the village, and by the clergyman’s family,” interposed Lucy.

“ Oh, I meant none of the great people—the gentry—could endure her,” returned Esther.

“ Lucy is determined to gather up all hopeful symp-

tombs," observed Margaret, "as a child picks his plums from his pudding; but I fear in this case the poor child would be starved."

"No wonder," said Lucy, smiling, "you know I have bound myself to the service of this fair lady for one twelve months, and during that time I am her knight."

"It is all very well if we are to look upon your defence as special pleading," said Margaret, "and we shall applaud you for making the best of a bad cause."

"But it is *not* special pleading," said Lucy, earnestly, "it is *not* a bad cause; I can say sincerely that I have not heard a word to make me think disparagingly of Mrs. Davenport; on the contrary, I like her conduct, as far as I have heard, and I can account for any apparent roughnesses of manner, by the prejudice of those who reported."

"Then the prejudice must be on the side of Lady Georgina," observed Esther, sharply, "and I should like to know if that is likely: Lady Georgina has the strongest possible family feeling, and had been straining every nerve to be kind and useful to her young relation."

"And if she was prejudiced, I should like to know why," continued Helen.

"Aye, to be sure," pursued Esther, "it must be of course Miss Robinson's own fault, what else?"

Lucy had her own misgivings to combat, and however unfair she esteemed the conclusions of the present party, she did not dare persist in any farther defence. It was considered that she yielded up the field, and the conversation was pursued with rather more vigour and decision than before.

As soon as Lucy had completed her task, she rose to return home; but before she had taken her final departure,

Mr. Frederick Frampton made his appearance, and she had to witness the scene of the decision of the wager, which was one much more exciting than any that had come before. Mr. Frampton most triumphantly bore away the palm, by unravelling his deceptive piece of workmanship before the eyes of his fair judges; and the skill and temper which he displayed on the occasion, won him the warm approbation of the audience.

During her solitary walk home, Lucy had time for many reflections on the scenes she had been engaged in; and perhaps the contrast of the sudden stillness of a secluded path, where her thoughts were undisturbed by any sound beyond the voice of a bird, or the rapid buzz of an insect on the wing, added for the moment to her natural disposition to view, and speculate upon passing events, more as a by-stander, than as one who was acting a part in the general drama. Yet Lucy was by no means fitted to be a cool spectator of the scenes of life; and her consciousness of this, as well as of her inability to conduct matters so as to satisfy herself and others at the same time, added to the distaste she felt at and after such meetings. Afterwards, indeed, it was worse than at the time, as she now felt. Her rate of walking seemed to keep pace with the hurry of her thoughts and feelings; so rapid was her pace at length, that as she entered the parsonage gate, it would have been supposed she was hastening home with extraordinary news. Her father, however, who was in the garden, could read Lucy better; and stepping forwards, and looking good-humouredly at her, he arrested her progress, saying, "Well, Lucy, well! what's amiss?"

"Amiss! papa," cried Lucy, laughing, "nothing's amiss; what makes you think so?"

"The sit of your shawl and the flow of all your drapery, tells me there is something very much amiss," continued Mr. Grove.

"Oh, papa, it is nothing—really nothing," replied Lucy, laughing, "only I am vexed, and provoked, and savage with myself and all the world."

"Well, then I think I was not far wrong, Lucy, when I said there was something very amiss. And pray what is all this about?"

"Really I hardly know," said Lucy, "only I know a great deal is my fault, I am such a bad manager; you know I am not used to be so much in the world, and I am not fit for it; I am always saying rude things, and getting myself and others into scrapes."

"Best not get in, certainly," said the papa, "but next, best get out."

"That is the misfortune, papa; I have just talent for the one and not for the other; but it is not myself that I am thinking of just now."

"Then who, my dear?" asked her father.

"Why Mrs. Davenport, papa; I really am so vexed! and I am afraid I have made bad worse; they seem so determined that she shall be just the contrary to what I wish, and they really seem bent on making it so."

"Making it so, my dear Lucy! how can they make it so?" said Mr. Grove.

"Oh, papa, by talking; by saying over, and over, and over again, the same things—making tales out of nothing, or telling them their own way. I cannot think how good-natured people, like the Boltons, can fall into any practice so unfair and unkind."

"All will come right, my dear," replied her father, "when Mrs. Davenport herself appears to make it so."

"You really think so, do you, papa?" said Lucy; "well, I don't know; they are talking to every body, and make such a fuss about the bells not ringing, that I really think the whole village will be agitated if they do not. It will be very hard for Mrs. Davenport to get over all this, especially if there is any thing inexperienced in her way of behaving at first."

"I suppose these Framptons have been hard at work, by all this," said Mr. Grove.

"Oh, it is entirely their doing, I think," replied Lucy; "I do not like them at all, especially the brother,—you know how much he has said against Mrs. Davenport,—but the Boltens seem ready to be bewitched by them. Oh, how I do wish the bells may ring after all! that would be the best beginning possible!"

"Well, my dear, and why do you suppose they should not?" asked Mr. Grove, very simply; "have you heard any thing since the morning when I asked Holmes?"

Lucy felt perplexed for a moment, then said, laughing, "No, nothing, papa; but you see the mischief these people do; they really persuade one out of every thing, and of course they do the same with others. I am sure I should never remember what actually had or had not happened, if I was much out in the world."

"You would soon learn the value of each person's tales, my dear," said her father.

"But, papa, I do not like that," returned the daughter; "I should not like to live among those I must distrust, whose words and reports must be filtered through a medium of my own, before I could receive them."

"Human imperfection is such, my dear," said her father, "that this must be the case, more or less, with all of us. Difference of character alone will cause it—far more prejudice and passion."

"Well, I can tolerate such a filtering stone, as far as difference of character demands it," said Lucy, "but no farther."

"We must be content, Lucy, with the sphere in which Providence has placed us, and we must live at peace with our neighbours."

"Yes, papa, that is what I wish," said Lucy, "but such people as these will not let me live in peace. They speak ill of others, and magnify peculiarities, if not excellencies, into grievous faults; and they jest down the truth. Others can manage better than I do. All this irritates me, and I had rather return to my school-room and nursery, and be a little child again. Oh, papa, you cannot tell how I feel after such mornings as these; I could sit down and cry for an hour, and sometimes I do. Every body seems heartless and silly. I am sick, quite sick, of the endless quarrels and making-ups. It is not my taste, and I cannot respect people who go on in this way."

"Well, my dear," replied Mr. Grove, "you have every right to choose your own friends; but you must not forget that your neighbours, and those you have known from your youth, have a claim upon you."

"I am sure, papa, I wished that those nearest us should be my friends," said Lucy; "I always liked all in the village when I was younger, particularly the Boltons, and I can scarcely tell why there should be any change; it may be partly because I have grown up different from what they expected, and they do not like me."

"There is something in your being so much younger than most of them," observed Mr. Grove, "and from your having grown up in the midst of them, before their eyes."

"Ah, papa," replied Lucy, "it must be more than that, it must be something in myself; because the younger Boltons, and Hardings, and Harrises, have been in just the same situation, and they never have felt my difficulties."

"Well, my dear, I have no doubt there is some truth in what you say," returned Mr. Grove, "but really I cannot do much to help you. You must learn a little more wisdom of word, and patience, and make the very best of your neighbours, for *your* own sake, and for *their* own sake I need not direct you, since the first² will lead to it."

"I am sure," cried Lucy, warmly, "I do not wonder at people formerly making religious houses, and turning monks and nuns; it is just what I should like to do now, if I could but think it right. How much pain and turmoil it would save all one's life."

"It may be better for the weak to fly away from their duties, rather than fall in a time of temptation," observed Mr. Grove, "it *may* be better, we cannot say; but surely, Lucy, you would not in a cool moment desire to abandon your path of duty, merely for the sake of comfort and ease! You know better than I can tell you, that there is not a Christian in this world whose temptations are greater than his helps."

"I see, papa," replied Lucy, thoughtfully, "that I am inclined to look too much on one side of the subject. I will make an experiment the other way, and that I can now do cheerfully, for you cannot think what a relief your

permission to me just now has been, to choose my own friends. If I may look upon others in a lower light, I can do very well now, though all through this last year the daily trouble and disappointment I have met with, has been more than I wish to talk or think of."

"Only bear it rightly, Lucy," said her father, "and it will some day enhance the value of real friends."

"But how sad, papa, that it should be so! Oh, what an easy way it seems of setting things right, even in this world, if every body would be like Mr. Davenport! We have no fear of drawbacks and blemishes there!"

"No fear, Lucy?" asked Mr. Grove, with a smile.

"Ah, papa," cried Lucy, "do not remind me of that! Oh, if we are disappointed there, who can we ever trust?"

"Well, Lucy," said her father, with a very calm assured smile, "I do not expect or intend to be disappointed."

"Thank you, dear papa," exclaimed Lucy, "that is the most comfortable word you have spoken!" So saying, she darted across the lawn, and disappeared into the house.

Mr. Grove, with rather thoughtful steps, turned towards that part of the garden where his wife was engaged in some gardening operation. "Janet, my dear," said he, rather abruptly, "has any thing struck you lately about Lucy?"

"Struck me!" exclaimed Mrs. Grove, with her usual quiet manner, "struck me! No!—what do you mean?"

"I think Lucy a good deal excited."

"Lucy is always excited," replied his wife.

"Well, well, then, to come to the point," returned Mr. Grove, "did it ever strike you that she thinks a good deal of Mr. Davenport?"

"To be sure," replied Mrs. Grove, "it must strike every body that Lucy always did, and probably always will think a good deal of Mr. Davenport. You do not object to it, do you?"

"My dear Janet!" exclaimed Mr. Grove, smiling, "you are as tiresome as when you were young; you will not understand when you do not choose."

Mrs. Grove only smiled, and went on dressing her geraniums.

"My dear," continued Mr. Grove, "I think you should at least give the idea one thought. Suppose Lucy has just been a little bit, a very little bit indeed, attracted by Davenport."

"I should be ashamed of any girl in Lucy's position with regard to our friend, who could be only a very little bit indeed attracted by Mr. Davenport," replied Mrs. Grove, "and I never expect to be ashamed of a daughter of mine."

"Oh, Janet, my love," said Mr. Grove, "we must never be over confident of our children—who can tell?"

Mr. Grove spoke with great feeling. His wife ceased her work, and continued with much more apparent interest, "I am glad, Horace, at any rate, that you confess this would be disgraceful in Lucy."

"I hardly like to be as strong as that," replied he.

"But you *have* been as strong, my dear," persisted the lady, "your tone betrayed it."

"Well, but suppose it is true," said he, "Davenport is so good, so agreeable and cultivated, and moreover so youthful and handsome; he has had so much to do with Lucy, and has taken such an interest in all her pursuits, that such a thing is not impossible."

"What! you think she has mistaken his motives?"

"No, not exactly that, I believe," replied Mr. Grove; "I think his manner too simple and friendly—at least, I should never have made such a mistake for her; but I know fathers are not good judges of such matters."

"And this, my dear," said Mrs. Grove, smiling, "is your only excuse for wronging poor Lucy by such a thought. Men cannot understand a true woman's heart, though they think themselves so capable and skilful. I do not say that such young ladies as some I could mention hereabouts might not indulge such a fancy, either with or without a mistake; but I do say, that to do so would be disgraceful, and must be a sign of a weakness of character, which it would make me miserable, day and night, to suspect in any daughter of mine."

Mrs. Grove paused, her husband was silent, and she continued, "Lucy never could have a reasonable cause for the fancy of a sign or symptom of attachment in Mr. Davenport. The position and character of both parties was such as to make a mistake impossible;—in some cases it may not be so."

"Well, my dear, if I had but thought of it in time," said Mr. Grove, smiling affectionately, "I would have made the experiment in you."

"And I am sure then you would have died an old bachelor, as far as I was concerned," replied the lady, smiling in return, "for I should never have given you a thought, beyond considering you the most learned and pleasant young gentleman of my acquaintance."

"I ought to be satisfied, I think," said Mr. Grove, pleased, even at this time of day, with a compliment from

his wife, "but still I am inclined to make some allowance for young ladies more decidedly affectionate."

"I excuse you," replied his wife, "because you are a man. That accounts both for the kindness and the vanity of your wish. But depend upon it, Horace, on the word of a woman who married for love, a premature affection on the lady's side, betrays a weakness and deficiency of character, of which every true hearted woman would be utterly ashamed."

"Well, my dear, I know you always have peculiar notions on this subject," replied Mr. Grove, "and though, as you say, it takes down my vanity as a man, as a father I like to hear you talk as you do. I only wished to give you this hint about our dear enthusiastic girl."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Grove; "but set yourself at rest. Trust me and believe that Lucy was never any more in love with Mr. Davenport, than with his two sisters, all her own family, and old nurse Kettlethwaite."

Mr. Grove smiled, and felt there was a strong reasonableness in his wife's words.

The expected Monday came. In the evening the village bells struck up a merry peal, loud and long, and the little doubt which some might entertain of the cause, was solved the next morning by the news that Mr. and Mrs. Davenport arrived at Branstone the evening before.

CHAPTER VII.

THE following conversation occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Davenport this very morning after breakfast. Louisa had put off going over the house and grounds with her husband for a space, having caught a view of what interested her more; namely, a china card basin, partly full of visiting cards. It was evident to her that these were recently left, and her idea was not incorrect. They were cards left by families in the neighbourhood during the course of the last week. "Oh, Henry," cried she, "how I do detest all this form and etiquette; I did hope I should escape; I begged you to shield me from all these observances."

"Then we should have kept to our first day, and you would have been at home," replied her husband.

"But I do not want to be at home. I do not want to visit at all; why should we? Will you get tired of home, Henry? I shall not."

"I think those who shrink most from any positive duties get soonest tired of their greatest enjoyments," said Mr. Davenport.

"But then, Henry, do you really call visiting a positive duty? I never thought of such a thing."

"It is the only way I could ever look upon it, or ever get through it with tolerable satisfaction to myself," said

Mr. Davenport ; "but are you, then, Louisa, so fond of society, so devoted to visiting, that it is nothing but pleasure and delight to you?"

"To me, Henry! What can you be thinking of? I hate and detest it. I cannot endure strangers and chance people; and if they happen to have titles before their names, like this, and this," added she, laughing, and throwing down two cards, "they become more unbearable still. Oh, Henry, do you mean to make me visit all these people?"

"Do not distress yourself, Louisa," replied he; "those are the only titles among our acquaintance, and it is only one of the two I wish you to care about."

"Well, I am afraid I cannot care about any body who has a title before her name; I do detest grandees," returned Louisa; "I had a specimen at Brinksworth, which will last me for life. Now, Henry, there's a good creature, let us forget the gentry—the county families, and tell me about your simple neighbours in the village. I have no objection to know them, and I think I can like them; but you must never ask me to like any body for whom I must put on my best dress."

"Well, I want to talk to you of the Groves, and the clergyman is the most proper person to begin with."

"No! no!" cried Louisa, laughing, "not the Groves. I respect Mr. Grove, though I cannot expect to get on with such a learned and such an old man, Henry; but Mrs. Grove, I feel quite sure, will not suit me. I know her connexions are of rank, and I feel sure she is stiff or high, or something that makes her disagreeable."

"Louisa, you must not be prejudiced," said her hus-

band, looking grave ; " I have always been on the most intimate terms with the Groves."

" Ah," cried Louisa, " you cannot say that Mrs. Grove is not what I think her !—Come," continued she, before her husband could speak, " here is Mrs. Bolton's card. See, *she* called immediately ! I like that, it seems friendly and warm-hearted."

" Then you do not object to Mrs. Bolton's card !" said Mr. Davenport, drily.

" Oh, there is use in some people's cards," replied Louisa, conscious of an inconsistency ; " but I do not like forms and ceremonies."

" Well, perhaps Mrs. Grove would not be so formal and ceremonious as to leave a card at all. I told Groves you disliked form."

" That would be kind, certainly," said Louisa ; " but time will show all about these people, and meanwhile I do not mean to be prejudiced."

" And meanwhile, my dear Louisa," continued Mr. Davenport, " let me warn you against committing yourself hastily."

" Well, I will try," returned Louisa, " but it is hard ; you know manner commits me."

" You know you always have a tyrannical husband to fall back upon," said Mr. Davenport, looking not very stern.

" Ah, that is the worst of being married !" cried Louisa, " I begin to feel it already. One is no longer oneself, and one scarce dare think, much less speak, one's opinions and feelings. Alice used to say this would be good discipline for me, but I do not like it at all."

" I am bound to receive all that Alice says as just and

wise," returned Mr. Davenport, smiling; "but come, now, Louisa, let me ring for Evans, and let us go over the house together. She is all agitation all these minutes."

Mr. Davenport held his hand on the bell for permission.

"Oh, I do hate going over houses!" cried Louisa; "and I am so afraid of housekeepers, I never know what to say! Must I go, Henry?—Well, really you are so obedient, and look so patient, you nice good creature! I must let you ring. How tiresome you are! I do wish you would not be so obedient."

"What, you think it a new secret of command?"

"I am rather afraid of it, certainly," cried Louisa; "I believe my nature is better suited to a regular good battle now and then."

"Well, for the sake of appearances, we must defer that till the bridal reign is over."

"Oh, Henry, I do believe you delight in bringing images of form and ceremony constantly before my eyes.—But here is Evans's tap at the door! Oh, what shall I say?"

There is no occasion to follow the party in their peregrinations. The last room they came to was Mrs. Davenport's own *boudoir*, which thoroughly charmed her, and in which certainly she was at no loss for something to say. It had been evidently furnished with an express attention to her own peculiar taste. There was nothing costly about it—far otherwise. There was neither rosewood nor mahogany, nor gold, nor tapestry or rich work. All was plain and neat, yet elegant withal; and the light style of fitting up suited exactly with the snug low room and the scene without. The window opened upon a balcony full of plants, from which a flight of steps led on to the lawn

at the side of the house. With this room ended their view of the house, and here Mrs. Evans took her departure.

"She is not near as alarming as I expected," said Louisa, as the housekeeper closed the door; "I think she seems as much afraid of me as I am of her."

"She has a great desire to please and satisfy you, Louisa, I know that," said Mr. Davenport.

"Please me!" cried Louisa; "how can she care any thing about me? Well, if it is so, the desire proves her to be very good-natured; I thought she would have hated any one coming as I do, to make her an underling where she had been mistress."

"Don't you know, Louisa," said her husband, smiling, "that all faithful servants desire nothing so much as a good wife for their master, if he happens to be a bachelor; and poor Evans has been sighing and pining for this for me these ten years past."

"Ah," cried Louisa, "I begin to see how I shall disappoint every body; you know well enough, I am the last in the world to make a good wife."

"Is that meant as a compliment to my discernment?" asked Mr. Davenport, laughing.

"I do not pretend to understand your motives in choosing me," replied Louisa, intending when she began speaking, to say something of what she actually felt; but a different mood came over her, and she ended, "perhaps, because you thought yourself so good, that you required an antidote; or perhaps, on the principle of the man who got the worst wife he could, as a piece of self-denial."

"The last is more in your way than mine, I think," observed Mr. Davenport.

"No, no," replied Louisa, "nothing so exaggerated as that. I do admire—and more than admire—I wish to imitate, real practical self-denial, such as the Bible authorizes, but not any thing fanciful or silly."

"Tell me in what respect."

"Well, then you must not be vexed with me, or disappointed," returned the young wife, "if I tell you exactly. It has made me melancholy to go over the house with you, and remember how unlike it is in all its arrangements and appointments, from what I should have chosen as my married home. Do tell me, Henry, do all these superfluities, this state and grandeur, seem consistent with the rules of the Gospel?"

"I know,—I feel," replied Mr. Davenport, very seriously, "that these are great drawbacks—great snares—but what would you have me do?"

"Why would it be more wrong now, to sell all and give to the poor, than at the time when our Saviour commanded it?" asked Louisa.

"We should remember it was never a general command," observed Mr. Davenport; "our Saviour's command was to an individual; and during the time that community of goods was the custom in the Church, it was never prescribed."

"Very true," replied Louisa, "but if giving up all is a higher rule of life! what do you say to that?"

"I never answer such questions in the general," returned Mr. Davenport, "there should always be a particular case; and in this particular case I am not a good person to satisfy you. I have thought too much of the question, and am too well satisfied myself upon it."

"Then you *have* thought about it!" cried Louisa;

"how glad I am!—but what a strange reason for not being able to satisfy me!"

"Well, I will do what I can," said Mr. Davenport, "but all seems to have passed away from me but my conclusions. In the first place, I found myself born to a certain inheritance. I had a birthright: what was I to do with it—value it, treasure it, or despise and sell it?"

"Oh, Henry," cried Louisa, "surely that is not a fair allusion! It was for a 'morsel of meat' that Esau sold his birthright:—how different!"

"Then you think the history warrants the conclusion, that Esau's fault was the very bad bargain he made—the little he got in exchange, not the parting with his birthright."

"I never thought of it in that way," said Louisa, after some consideration; "I suppose there must have been some fault in the thing itself; but then, in the Jewish dispensation, the laws of property and birth had more of a religious obligation than in ours."

"Perhaps so, but this was before the Mosaic code," observed Mr. Davenport.

"Very true," returned Louisa; "but after all, these laws belong more to natural religion than to Christianity."

"We must take care how we disjoin principles we find in the scriptures," replied Mr. Davenport; "and the law of birth and inheritance seems one that is positively enjoined in the Old Testament, and not set aside in the Gospel. For this reason alone, it seems to me to need some direct call, or some imperative necessity to disregard it."

"Then you think nobody now can obey the precept, to sell all and give to the poor?"

"I will not say," returned Mr. Davenport, "why should I? Let us keep to our particular case. I find myself in possession of an inheritance: I did not make it—I did not seek it. It was the gift of Providence to my father first; then to me. I must answer to Him who gave it me some day, if I do not transmit it uninjured to my successor. If it is even diminished or impaired, I am responsible; and my reasons for suffering this, much more for parting with it, must be ample and adequate."

"The young man in the Gospel might have said this."

"No, he had a divine command."

"Then the early Christians."

"They had the direct sanction of the Apostles or the Church," returned Mr. Davenport; "but if they did feel it, they were not compelled to part with either lands, or even money. When it was sold, even, was it not in their own power?"

"And is this all your argument?" asked Louisa.

"All the scripture argument I shall give you at present," returned Mr. Davenport, "but I will add a few practical and expediency ones. Do you remember and consider the claims the poor have on such an estate as this?"

"You could sell and give to those in the place if you please."

"That leads to too long a question at present," returned Mr. Davenport; "but I suppose you do not mean that by any such means the poor could be made to cease out of the land."

"No, I believe I never expect, or, I suppose, wish that," replied Louisa.

"Then I will just go on to say," continued her hus-

band, "that the possessor of this estate is a sort of guardian, divinely appointed over the poor, and that, with the Church in the place, he is bound to watch over their interests, and advance their temporal comforts and spiritual welfare to the utmost. This is beyond money; but this duty he gives over and runs away from when he parts with his property. Surely he should have the strongest assurance of judging rightly before he takes such a step."

"He must of course act in faith," observed Louisa.

"I do not speak of others," returned her husband, "but I say our faith must not outrun the faculties God has given us; and therefore I should pause before I consented to cease to be the guardian of so many who have a right to look up to me."

"But what a charge, what a responsibility, this brings upon you! Did you ever think of that, Henry? Every thing you do or say seems important—every plan you take in hand, and every sum you lay out."

"I ought to think of it," returned Mr. Davenport, "it is my place to do so."

"I think this view makes the possession of wealth tenfold more onerous and painful than the mere act of giving it away, and managing to live any how," observed Louisa.

"If the view is a right one," replied Mr. Davenport, "we must not shrink from the duties it involves: either in a cowardly manner casting off responsibility by one act, or by thoughtlessly smothering the sense of the daily responsibility required of us."

"Still, Henry," pursued his wife, "the Scriptures—our Lord Himself—bid us look upon wealth as the greatest of snares. We must cut off the right hand and pluck out

the right eye if they cause us to offend. Surely this precept is as applicable to wealth as to any thing else."

"Well, let it be," returned Mr. Davenport, "we must trust and pray for light to see if and when we do offend: who can be sure? But I do not see that this precept is meant to discourage those who have the highest aim, namely: to obey, without turning to the right hand or left—I mean; to follow out their duties *in* their appointed sphere, rather than create their own duties and form their own sphere—much less through weakness or wickedness so to fall, as for safety's sake to be compelled to quit them. All I mean is, that such an aim is a high one, however a person may fall short of it. We know that the state of rich and poor are sanctioned by Scripture throughout. We are told that the poor shall never cease out of the land. This alone recognizes the possession of wealth as a lawful state, and if so, it must be *possible* for a Christian to attain the highest degree of perfection in that state."

"Possible, but very, very difficult," observed Louisa, thoughtfully.

"Yet quite possible with God," returned her husband.

"And then you will say," continued Louisa, "that the greater the temptations are, if they are overcome, the happier is the state of that person; so that one in the lot of real poverty or real riches, who acts in the highest Christian spirit, has an opportunity of attaining a higher perfection than one in a more moderate state."

"You are so fond of generalizing, Louisa!" said her husband, smiling; "how can we estimate natural disposition?—besides, surely each man's lot is the best for himself, if he does not thwart it."

Well, I confess I have a prejudice in favour of poverty," said Louisa.

"I more than agree with you," returned her husband ; "I feel that those really poor must be the most blessed ; we have our Lord's word for the poor, but never for the rich,—almost the contrary ; yet the state of poverty is a very different one from that to which a man arrives by casting himself into it ; it can only be by a long course of years, that he could grow into a really poor man. No man can assume to himself the state of poverty, any more than he can make himself of another country ; he may be naturalized, and time may make his original nation or state forgotten—that is all."

"I wish we could find some encouragements to the rich in the Bible," observed Louisa ; "all seems to go the other way."

"All *direct* precepts do, I think, go the other way," returned Mr. Davenport, "but there are many indirect testimonies for those who need them. In the Old Testament they are much stronger than even one should expect ; almost every Old Testament saint was rich, and a point seems almost made of his being so, and continuing so. And though there is a change under the gospel, in our sanctions and practises, yet on no question ought we entirely to lose sight of the principles or precepts in any part of the Scripture, especially of the more general laws, given before the Mosaic dispensation."

"But the New Testament, Henry," said his wife, "it is there I wish to find some notices of encouragement."

"Nobody can assert, from any passage or passages to be found there, that wealth is an unlawful state for a Christian," returned Mr. Davenport ; "this you allowed just

now. I think then, that all directions to the rich, scattered about the Epistles and elsewhere, *are* encouragements."

"Certainly," said Louisa, "nothing can be more encouraging to those who are satisfied they are right in holding large possessions, than the three verses in Timothy, addressed to the rich, beginning, 'Charge them that are rich in this world.'"

"That passage alone sanctions the possession, and even the enjoyment of wealth," observed Mr. Davenport, "though, at the same time, it exposes the snares and dangers which accompany them. It seems to me also that such an illustration as that of our Saviour's, may be looked upon as in some way ennobling wealth, 'Thou shouldest have put my money to the bank, that at my coming I should have received my own with usury.'"

"There may be some alight assurance in such words and passages," said Louisa, "but how alight! how very slight! and even for this we are obliged, as it were, to gather up the very crumbs that fall from the table."

"Let it be so, Louisa," said her husband, "if the rich may have the consolation of being in the case of the woman of Canaan, they are not so very much to be pitied."

"But, Henry, what a world we live in! how differently it judges!" cried Louisa; "if people in general, and good sort of people too, were to hear you talk, they would smile—some even would laugh at your last remark. Do not people of all sorts look upon money, and advancement, which leads to the possession of money, as the chief good? and is this according to the spirit of the Bible?"

"That ought to be no perplexity to us, who are warned

to expect this very perplexity," replied Mr. Davenport, "and who have bound ourselves to fight against the world, and the spirit of the world."

"Ah," cried Louisa, again, "I feel that can never be done, without getting free from all the trammels and shackles of society—the pomp of wealth and circumstance. But I will not tease you to go over the same ground again now. Will you only tell me one thing; did you ever know of any one, in our day, who had actually sold or given up his property, on the principle we have been discussing."

"Yes, I did," replied Mr. Davenport, "and I know more than one who did something of the sort; but the one I will mention, was the nearest your views. He was a man who had made his own money. He bought an estate, and became something of a county man: he was of a gay turn, kept a pack of hounds, and was a sportsman. Suddenly, he took a new view of things, and quite changed his mode of living. Soon after, he thought he ought to sell all and give to the poor. He literally meant to sell all and keep himself by the labour of his hands. He accordingly put up his estate to sale by auction: there was no bid high enough to satisfy him; he thought it was going too low; so he bought it in."

"He could not have been sincere," observed Louisa.

"But he was sincere to a certain point, and he proved it," said Mr. Davenport, "he put his estate in some way out of his hands, and lodged with his wife in a poor peasant's cottage, as a part of the family. Here they lived a considerable time, always partaking the fare and the living of their poor hosts."

"Yes, that is something approaching to an instance of

my notion," said Louisa; "but what did he do—how did he employ himself?"

"He had not much time, I believe," returned Mr. Davenport, "for he, poor man, fell ill. His wife had a good property of her own, but whether he lived upon this or not, I do not know. He became worse and worse, and the doctors pronounced him in a hopeless state of consumption; he alone, believed this not the case; he had constantly persisted that he had had a revelation from heaven, assuring him he should recover, and not even the appearance of the very worst symptoms of consumption would make him give up his belief; so positive was he, that I think some of his friends became of his mind. He dismissed all doctors, and gave up their medicines; but before very long, he died. I give you the whole case, that you may make what comment you choose."

After a pause, Louisa said, "Well, it is very strange indeed, I cannot account for it or understand it; but I admire his wife more than himself. I do not wish to do so, but I do;—she was a woman of property, you say."

"Yes, and quite submitted to his wish; I believe she followed the will of another, rather than her own; is that the reason you admire her, Louisa?"

"I don't know," returned Louisa; "I don't want to know just yet. What has become of her? is she living as he did?"

"His estate, which was not sold, came to her at his death," replied Mr. Davenport, "and the last time I heard of her, she was living there."

Louisa was silent, and after a pause, Mr. Davenport proposed taking her through the gardens. She very cheerfully rose, saying, "I hope, Henry, you are not

vexed with me for talking as I do ;—but I must ; really I must.”

“My principles would be mere pretence, Louisa,” returned he, “if I felt vexation beyond what my own thoughts often occasion.”

“How alike you and Alice talk and think !” cried Louisa, “but it is painful to me—very painful—that the two persons I most trust, feel so uncertain about right and wrong ; about what they ought and ought not to think and do ; I like certainty—I hate suspense and doubt.”

Mr. Davenport repeated the following lines :—

“There are, who darkling and alone,
Would wish the weary night were gone,
Though dawning morn should only show,
The secret of their unknown woe :
Who pray for sharpest throbs of pain
To ease them of doubt’s galling chain ;
‘Only disperse the cloud,’ they cry,
‘And if our fate be death, give light, and let us die.’

Unwise I deem them, Lord, unmeet
To profit by Thy chastenings sweet,
For Thou wouldst have us linger still,
Upon the verge of good or ill ;
That on Thy guiding hand unseen
Our undivided hearts may lean,
And this, our frail and foundering bark
Glide in the narrow wake of Thy beloved ark.”

Louisa had never heard these lines before, and was much struck by them ; though the thoughts were new to her mind, she did not set herself against them ; “Yet, after all, Henry,” said she, “though I may learn to un-

derstand these verses, they will never make me like suspense. What can be so wretched and torturing?"

"A miserable certainty," said Mr. Davenport.

"Well, I do not think so," replied Louisa; "but my suspense and your suspense are of a different nature, I suspect. I was thinking of doubt of knowing what to *do* for the best. Do you know, Henry," continued she, presently, in a different tone, "that one day, between February and May, I had more than half a mind to ask you to have me, in order to get rid of you, and put myself out of my pain."

"And suppose I had said 'No,' " returned Mr. Davenport, feeling and looking, however gratified at the compliment, as any husband ought.

"Why then all would have been as it should be—*quite* right," said Louisa.

"Which it is not now," added her husband.

"Not quite," returned the wife, in a manner that was not very irritating.

After this, they descended the steps, above which they had been seated during the foregoing conversation, and proceeded on their view of the grounds.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOUISA was so charmed with Mrs. Bolton's prompt kindness in calling, that she persuaded her husband to return the visit immediately. When they arrived at home, they found the Groves had been calling. The next day Mr. Davenport took his wife to see an old couple who spent their best years in the service of his family. They were now pensioned off and placed in a cottage, which served as a lodge to one of the park gates. Louisa sat alone talking with them some time, and thought she would return through the village rather than by the park road. In so doing, she found presently that she was passing by the Close, where they had called the day before; and when she turned the corner and came to the open fence before the house, she perceived Mrs. Bolton on the lawn. She paused, while Mrs. Bolton stepped forwards and greeted her. The next instant Louisa had very readily accepted the invitation of walking in, and was admitted by the small wicket gate, of whose existence she had not been aware.

The next morning Mrs. Bolton made an early call at the Parsonage. "Well," cried she, "of course you have seen the bride by this time."

Mrs. Grove replied in the negative.

"How extraordinary!" exclaimed Mrs. Bolton. "I thought, by-the-bye, she staid so long with us yesterday,

that there was no time for a call for you ; but it does seem strange ! We have seen so much of her that we all seem quite intimate—quite old friends.”

“ Then you like her as well as at first.”

“ Oh, better, she improves every minute,” returned Mrs. Bolton ; “ and *our* praise, you know, is most valuable, since certainly we were greatly prejudiced against her. She is a most charming creature—such simplicity, and so unaffected ; I don’t wonder at the raptures of my girls.”

“ And what becomes of Mr. and Miss Frampton’s reports ?” asked Mrs. Grove.

“ Oh,” replied the other lady, “ one does not always mind what young people say, and the Framptons are great talkers.”

“ So I thought,” observed Mrs. Grove.

“ I leave the young people to settle all that among themselves,” continued Mrs. Bolton ; “ Margaret does not trouble herself about it, but Helen, you know, is particular, and has plenty of spirit, and she is leading young Frampton quite a life about his reports. He will not give in, and so they go on,” added Mrs. Bolton, smiling ; “ they have always seemed bent on differing upon every subject. But I really want to talk to you of our bride, for the other day I could not tell you half ; besides, the first call was somewhat formal, and Mr. Davenport was there ; but yesterday she came in on passing,—all alone, in the easiest way in the world,—and sat chatting with us all for above an hour. Pride !—nonsense and stuff ! I could see nothing of it ; she is the most frank, simple hearted, confiding creature I ever met with ; not a thought concealed.”

"And what did you talk about?" asked Mrs. Grove.

"Oh, almost every thing," returned the visitor; "she talked to me a long time, but I was anxious not to engross her, so gave her up to the girls, who will tell Lucy all they think of her. She first talked to me about the poor in the place, and gave an account of a visit she had just been paying to old Jacob and his wife. Her heart seems in the poor and the schools. She said she longed to go through the village and visit the schools, but complained that Henry—it was so new and pretty to hear Mr. Davenport called Henry—would not let her till she had seen Mr. Grove; and she seemed so anxious for this reason to see you, that I really thought, though it was so late, she might have persuaded Mr. Davenport to make a short call, just you know, for form's sake, yesterday after she left us."

"When she calls, I believe we are to take them to the schools," said Mrs. Grove.

"Ah, then you may be sure she will come to-day, for to-morrow is Saturday, and a bad day for the schools; and I know she has set her heart on taking a class in the Sunday school, on Sunday. She said she liked to begin at once as she should go on. She seems to think nothing of trouble, and has no selfishness about her. I quite begin to change my opinion of older men marrying young wives. The sight of such a fresh-minded simple young creature as this, is enough to convert one. I am sure I am not surprised at Mr. Davenport!"

The conversation proceeded some time in the same strain; but before Mrs. Bolton took her leave, her daughters came in, and gave Lucy the rapturous account their mother had promised. As a proof of the entire intimacy

that had sprung up between the parties, they mentioned that they had told Mrs. Davenport the reports they had heard about her, and confessed how prejudiced they had been till they saw her. They were quite charmed with the mode in which she received this account, and their admiration of her manners and qualities knew no bounds. Lucy was highly delighted, till she remembered that the expressions of these young ladies would be quite as warm, if Mr. Frederick Frampton were the object of discussion; and that, in fact, a year ago, they had been equally so upon his sister.

One morning, not very long after this time, Mr. Davenport entered the room, rather hastily; "My dear Louisa," cried he,—then pausing for an instant, ended with, "I have just seen the Boltons."

Louisa laughed at his change of tone, and said, "Is that meant for news, Henry? When does one stir without seeing the Boltons?"

"I did not know you were so intimate with them," continued Mr. Davenport.

"Did you not?" said Louisa; "why you must know I have seen more of them than any one here."

"Yes, I know that," returned Mr. Davenport, hastily; "but do *you* know that they call you, 'Louisa?'"

"Did I know?—to be sure I did," replied Louisa, laughing; "I asked them to do so."

Mr. Davenport looked grave. Presently, he said, "Louisa, I begged you not to commit yourself in any way."

"Indeed, I have not forgotten your charge, Henry," said Louisa; "you cannot think how it has clung about me and checked me, constantly."

"Still, you seem to have committed yourself a good deal, in a short time."

"Do you call that committing myself?" cried Louisa, surprised; "well, even if it is, I could not help it; you know I told you I committed myself by manner."

"And therefore you should be doubly cautious in such ways. How can you be sure you will go on to like the Boltons as well as now; and if ever you have to draw back, you would justly bring blame, as well as pain, on yourself."

"Well, I am sure if you had told me, I would not have done so," said Louisa, "but these things come so naturally with *me*; I cannot bear form and ceremony, and if I like people, I like to show that I do, and throw off restraint."

"Well, you must remember I am vexed," said Mr. Davenport, "and, at any rate, beware of farther acts of the same sort, not only in that quarter, but elsewhere."

"You are a nice quiet creature!" cried Louisa, "and I hate myself for vexing you. I will not forget—indeed I will not. But, Henry, you cannot make me like *you*, or any sober calculating soul; when I do not like people, I can be as grave and discreet as yourself; but when I like people, I must show my feeling."

"Well, I do not object," replied Mr. Davenport, smiling, "only take care to like the right people."

"Ah, Henry," cried his wife, "I do feel so sure you are prejudiced; you do not come fresh upon things and people as I do; I have an advantage there. You see every thing through a vista of years—old, dull, by-gone years—and they distort your objects! I see every thing in the clear bright sun-light."

"Of novelty," added Mr. Davenport, and presently con-

tinued, "your sunbeams may dazzle or blind, more surely than my hazy vista."

"No, no," cried Louisa, "you may beat me at illustration and logic, but I am resolved my facts and practical conclusions shall be sounder than yours!"

"Well, Louisa," replied her husband, "it is your place to manage your own visiting affairs, and it is my place at first, to give you the help of my remarks. I do not interfere farther."

"The ear would call that a cross speech," said Louisa, "but the eye says otherwise. You see, Henry, I am so different from you; I judge so much more from countenance than you do, and I never am mistaken. There is something about a face I cannot describe or talk about, but I feel it; it is not beauty or grace, as you must know by the Boltons; Mrs. Bolton is a nice-looking woman, and has been pretty, but she is too old to be admired *for* her beauty; her daughters are undoubtedly plain, except Emma, whom I know least of; and besides being plain, there is a want of softness and refinement. I am quite sensible of this; yet they have a turn of countenance which attracts and satisfies me of their worth—besides all that I see and hear."

"Well, I say I do not interfere," repeated Mr. Davenport.

"You are a tiresome formal creature, Henry," cried the wife, "and I do not like you at all."

"Do you then wish me to interfere?" continued he.

"I wish you to be reasonable," said Louisa, laughing, "and not the cold, dull, formal, calculating soul you are. I am sure I wonder at any creature in the world caring one straw for you.—Henry," continued she, after a pause,

"you see, I think you are so used to refined society, and especially to your sisters, that I cannot quite trust you about ladies. I am conscious that I am not so very refined myself; I believe I have a latent love within of a little vulgarity,—it chimes in with my own roughnesses, and so I not only tolerate the same thing in the Boltons, but rather like it."

"I don't believe you would ever really like rudeness or roughness," said Mr. Davenport.

"Yes, if it is simple and harmless, and has no sting in it," returned Louisa. "I really believe the Boltons are quite innocent and kind at heart. All that is rough is manner, just as their voices are rough. It is almost physical; they cannot help it. I have, Henry, such a dread of getting to dislike people and things, merely because they are unrefined and out of taste—I hate the very expression 'out of taste.' I prefer people with frankness and capacity for intimacy, to all the good taste and propriety the world can produce."

"Very good," said Mr. Davenport, "but there are such things as familiarity without intimacy, and frankness without truth. Your contrasts are hardly fair,—what do you say to Clara,—my sister?"

"Oh, Clara is like Alice, unlike any body beside," cried Louisa; "you do not expect me to find an Alice or a Clara in every chance country village; if you do, I do not."

"Well, watch Lucy Grove."

"So I do," replied Louisa, "she is a beautiful object."

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT a week after this time, the following conversation took place between Mrs. Bolton and Louisa, who made an early call on that lady. All her daughters were out, on a gipsying expedition with Miss Hale and her party. Louisa came in, saying, "I did not like to pass, without coming in to ask how your son's sprained ancle was this morning."

"Oh, how kind and considerate you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Bolton; "he is getting better, and is gone with them to-day; but he cannot ride, which is a great disappointment to him, poor fellow. He is of an active turn, and cannot bear sitting still in a carriage."

"I could easily guess that," said Louisa, smiling.

"Ah, poor Laurry!" cried his mother, "few people but I know any thing of him; he is full of energy and youthful spirits, which are apt to carry him away, but he has a depth of thought and feeling, which none would suspect, and very few believe."

"Well, I am not one of those," said Louisa; "I thought his forehead the most striking I had ever seen for such a youth, the very first time I met him. I did not then know who he was; it was just before that nice call I made you, two days after I came."

"Ah, I shall not easily forget that," said Mrs. Bolton, with feeling; "I remember you were so kind as to remark on my poor boy, when he left the room."

"I thought his manner so pleasant and modest," observed Louisa, "much more so than in youths of that age in general."

"Ah, poor boy," continued his mother, "he felt that moment very much; you can, of course, in part tell why."

"I! no, indeed!" exclaimed Louisa.

"I mean his misfortune at Carlton school."

"No, indeed," continued Louisa, "I never heard any thing about it."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Bolton, "that is just like dear Mr. Davenport—such true delicacy of feeling! however I will not shrink from telling you. I do not defend Laurry; no! I allow he was very thoughtless, and that he acted against rule; but still there were excuses for him; he was the youngest in the scrape, and gave himself up to shield others, who escaped without any such punishment. The master gave him his choice of submitting to be put down in the school, or coming away. His spirit was too great for the first, and I myself confess, I thought it a strange sort of punishment, to put a boy back in his learning, because he had acted amiss out of school and lesson time. Nobody complained of his not learning, and to him, this punishment would have been just the same as coming away altogether; for his future prospects depended on his attaining a certain point by the time he was seventeen, as of course you know."

"No, indeed I do not," replied Louisa, again; "Henry has never told me any thing about these things."

"Ah, he hates talking of his good deeds!" said Mrs.

Bolton, gently, "he never lets his right hand know what his left does! But I will tell you, that I am determined. Like you, he was so good as to take a fancy to Laurence, and insisted on sending him to school, after his poor father's death. He said that if Laurry distinguished himself, or even satisfied his tutors, he would send him to college. After this unlucky misfortune, you know, he could do no more. It is true, Laurry had the good opinions of his masters, as regarded learning, and may be said to have distinguished himself already; he has gained books every half year; but all is over now. Mr. Davenport was all kindness; but he was too much displeased with Laurence—and quite justly—to allow him to think of forgiveness. Ah, Mrs. Davenport, men may be kind and feeling, but they do not know a mother's feelings, and not even you, with all your kindness, can tell what I have gone through, about that poor boy. For weeks, I lay awake, thinking it all over, and still hoping something might be done; but now, both he, I believe, poor fellow, and I, consider the matter settled, and I am in treaty;—indeed I have closed all but one more letter, with a respectable clothier, to take him in, in some capacity. It has been a hard trial to me, my dear. I am not high in my notions for my children, but I wish to see them gentlemen, as their father was before them. I know station does not so very much signify, if a man is a gentleman in himself; and this situation is one in which Laurry may rise; however, for the present, it alarms me; he will very soon have to travel for the house,—and that is such a sad trial to a young man, and leads to such temptation, in point of society."

"And what does your son say to it?" asked Louisa.

"Poor dear fellow, he is all meekness and obedience;

he says nothing, but I know what he thinks; his actions have proved his hopes and desires, for till this week, when all seems hopeless, he has, by stealth, kept up his classical studies."

"That shows his heart was another way, certainly," said Louisa, "but perhaps he will soon become reconciled to the change."

"Well, I hope so. Yet," continued Mrs. Bolton, "I can scarcely say that with truth. What a change! from the pursuits of a scholar and rank of a gentleman, to a mere menial office—a situation that an automaton could fill—and he, poor fellow, with such a mind! Ah, my dear Mrs. Davenport, you cannot understand my feelings. I have a dear affectionate family; in point of conduct to me, I have not a fault to find with any. My sons have been noted in the neighbourhood, for their affection and respect; but though they were all the fondest mother could desire in these respects, they have disappointed me. To this son, Laurence, my youngest, as I always consider him, I looked for all I desired in his brothers; he was my last hope, and you see how that has been blasted! I know it is a trial sent me to wean me entirely from the hopes of this world—but still it is a trial, and a deep one."

Mrs. Bolton had spoken throughout with great feeling, and Louisa, in silence, sympathized with the mother. She had a thousand thoughts, but had been all along restrained by the remembrance of her husband's reiterated warning to her, not to commit herself. So, heartily indignant at her own apparent coldness, she consoled Mrs. Bolton as well as she could, and reverted to the affectionate dispositions of her family.

"Yes, they are dear children, all of them," returned

Mrs. Bolton ; “ I know I have my consolations ; though I say it, my dear, I am not afraid to assert, that there is not a family in the county—no, nor in England—that can surpass mine in affection and duty. They may have their faults—who has not ? Some of them I know have. I am not blind to the defects of my children. They may have their faults, I say, but want of feeling and obedience is not one of them ; and this I would not exchange for many a more brilliant quality. This has always been my consolation, my dear, as I trust it will be yours and dear Mr. Davenport’s at my age. I know that however much my sons have been bent on favourite schemes of their own, there is not one among them who would not have stopped and at once cast away his darling wish, if I had but held up my finger ; and this is a delight and a solid satisfaction to a mother’s heart to reflect on.”

“ If they were going wrong,” said Louisa, after a pause, “ I wonder you did not do so.”

“ My dear,” replied Mrs. Bolton, mildly, “ you speak like a daughter, and not like a mother. You are too young to feel or understand the responsibility parents take upon themselves when they step in to direct grown up children. In childhood, it is the duty of parents to do so, undoubtedly ; but as character forms and tastes begin to develope, it is to my mind a step too daring, too presumptuous, to interfere. If I saw a young man going really and decidedly wrong, taking a sinful course, it would be different ; but I am thankful to say this has not been my hard lot. My boys, though decided in their tastes, were never vicious ; and how could I put in my solemn command, merely because a son chose to fix his head on settling in a business which I thought beneath his birth and

expectation ! No, my dear, my pride is not of that sort. These things may grieve me, but I dare not take the earthly weapon of force and maternal authority to combat them. No, never ! I never would force a grown up child's obedience, or even inclination. That which is not from the heart is good for nothing, so I must leave all in Higher Hands."

Mrs. Bolton spoke with great feeling, and Louisa again felt much moved. She thought what that lady had just said was quite true—that she was too young and inexperienced to understand such questions ; for though she thought and tried hard, she could not find any thing to say that satisfied her. She therefore kept silence.

Mrs. Bolton continued, as if she read Louisa's thoughts, " Yes, my dear, depend upon it what I say is correct ; you are too young to enter into my troubles. Sons, and growing up sons, are an anxiety which you cannot understand. Even if you had brothers, you could not feel as a parent does."

Louisa called to mind the anxiety her father often expressed, and began to remember she had never properly felt his trouble.

" It is so impossible," continued Mrs. Bolton, " to say how sons will turn out. Daughters are no anxiety to speak of, but boys take such extraordinary and unexpected turns. Perhaps you do not know the case to which I have been alluding. My eldest son, a fine promising young man, fitted for any rank or profession, suddenly gave up all his prospects and became a farmer. It was quite a passion with him ; nobody could dissuade him. Dear Mr. Davenport was, as he always is, all kindness, and lightened the trouble to me as much as possible ; but there

is' no really getting over such troubles and disappointments, Mrs. Davenport."

"Henry has never told me any of these things," observed Louisa; "I dare say because he knew they were subjects of pain to you."

"He is all delicacy always," replied Mrs. Bolton, "but I assure you I do not shrink from speaking to *you* of my family affairs. You are so kind and good, and I feel I owe so much to Mr. Davenport, that it would be a great pain to me to be compelled to keep silence."

Louisa at this time heard much more family pecuniary detail from Mrs. Bolton. She was much interested in all these accounts, and especially so in the trials of poor Mrs. Bolton.

CHAPTER X.

IT was not long after the foregoing conversation that Louisa wrote the following letter to Alice. She had always hoped that Alice would pay her a visit, but Mrs. Sidney's continued illness quite put that out of the question for the present.

My dear Alice,

It is a great disappointment to me, to be writing instead of talking to you. I can only console myself with the idea that this mode of intercourse is better than none ; though at the same time it annoys me to send you letters full of what seems mere gossip. I mean, however, to continue to do so, since I like you to know how I am going on ; and I have no objection to your remarks, though I know you will often differ from me as widely as Henry does. It must be a proof of the sweetness and mildness of my disposition, that I have chosen and keep on decent terms with a friend and a husband, who are always opposing and contradicting me. Indeed, as far as I can make out, Mrs. Bolton seems the only person who does not dispute with me, that I have ever cared for. By this you will perceive that I have gone on liking her as well as I expected. I never was so much taken with any woman of her age ; except, perhaps, your own dear

mamma, of whom I knew too little. I am sure I feel all the affection of a daughter towards Mrs. Bolton, and often and often have wished that she was Henry's mother, that I might have the excuse of transferring to her the mother's love which has existed latent in my heart all my life. She is the only person of her age and standing in whom I have ever found the power of intimacy ; so that I begin to renounce my theory, that age—not *crabbed* age—but “age and youth cannot live together ;” for I have found a sympathy in an elder, which I often have looked for in vain in my equals in years. She is so remarkable, because she is not what may be called clever ; some of her daughters are certainly more so than herself ; yet they are far inferior to her. There is a roughness and want of refinement about them, attractive as they are, from which their mother is free. But though I speak in this way of the daughters, you must not suppose that these are serious drawbacks. The defects I perceive are merely in manner, perhaps merely in conventional forms, for which they may be really the better. Society varies her garb in a country village and in a London drawing-room, and the first becomes her best. The Boltons are really charming !—such vivacity—almost wit—such sparkling good humour, and such fascinating frankness ! Yet they have no beauty to set them off ; no advantages of person, manner, or dress. They are, except Emma, undeniably plain, and they seem to despise all extraneous ornament. This recommends them to me, since it is a sign both of poverty and moderation. The point where I seem most to desire an alteration is in their voices, which are sharp and unharmonious, and which their frankness and buoyancy of spirit is not calculated to subdue. I feel this rather from a physical

defect in myself, than as a fault in them ;—my head never could bear loud talking in a room. But to all this Mrs. Bolton is an exception, and also Emma, who in person and manner is more like her mother than the rest. Now the Groves are as opposite as possible to this family. I promised to send you an account of them, and must do so now ; and as it is *Mr.* Grove who is your relation, I am glad to be able to begin with him, and say what a kind pleasant man I think him, in spite of his partaking of the stiff notions of his cousin at Brighton and his friend at Branstone. We had a talk the first time we met, going down to the school, on the Bible Society and cottage readings. He is very strong in his opinions, but has something about him that makes them very palatable and tolerable. He *looks* so very agreeable, that is partly the secret, I think. And now for his wife, whom you do not know, at least cannot remember. She is very many years younger than Mrs. Bolton, but she has no youth about her ;—I doubt if she ever was young. Under the most quiet gentle manners, she conceals most masculine qualities. She seems a pattern of perfection in all the duties of life ; just the person in former days to call forth a memoir or a sermon. I doubt however if she would supply the sort of materials for our day. She does too much, and talks too little, for the taste of our age. I state this as a *fact*, though it will make you smile. I do not know whether I mean it as a satire on Mrs. Grove, or on the times we live in ; for the fact is, I cannot like Mrs. Grove, do all I can. I did not tell you so at first, because I thought I ought to wait, since I wished to be intimate with the Groves, as Henry's oldest friends, and your connexions. But I am afraid that can never be : I am

amazed at Henry, and should think him bewitched, only that I account for his high opinion by remembering that Mr. Grove is a friend of his youth, and that he has taken all connected with this friend for granted. Besides this, there are all Mrs. Grove's valuable and practical qualities as a set off. She has done wonders in the place, by all accounts. The school is not like the same, and the whole place, outwardly at least, has been quite changed since she came. But then she rules by fear, and not by love. I have only been once with her to the school, and then I saw enough to be satisfied that the poor children quailed before her presence. She inflicted a very severe punishment ; but, to do her justice, was kind enough to listen to my mediation. I am not grown prejudiced, Alice ; and to prove this, I will tell you of my own accord, that Mrs. Bolton did little or nothing apparently in the village, when she was the clergyman's wife. I do not exactly know how much she attempted, whether she looked into the schools, &c., but outwardly she effected nothing. The children were rude and untaught, the people were slovenly and misbehaved. What she did, however, would naturally, from her character, not appear. I do not under-rate outward decency and order,—far from it ; I think it is to be attained in any great degree only by a mind of great power and energy ; but I would not judge these two ladies by the success of their systems. The good of the one may be on the surface, that of the other deeply buried, its effects never to be known in this world. Meanwhile let the visible good have its reward. I know Henry thinks I have become prematurely intimate with the Boltons. I am sorry for this, and tried to avoid it ; but you know how soon I commit myself when I like peo-

ple ; and I like people *really* so rarely, that I think this increases my tendency. Yet my consciousness of Henry's opinion keeps me back, and makes me feel very awkward sometimes. This is the nuisance of being married ; though, Alice, you would not feel it as I do ; there is no man in the world as cautious and wary as your own mind. There is a Miss Hale here, a worthy sort of person, but rather gossippy, I think. She has a niece with her now, still less to my taste, a harmless girl, but defective certainly in all ways. The Boltons are too good-natured to perceive such things. They are very intimate with Miss Hale, and all her nephews and neices, who are often staying here. I hear that some of them have met me at Brinksworth, but I cannot guess when or where. I am afraid you will think I am sinking down into a mere gossiping cipher in a gossiping country village, I must therefore say something of the minds and education of my new friends. And here is the difference between them and Miss Hale : the Boltons have considerable talents and mind, and some attainments, but not of a high order. Their education has been picked up for themselves by hap-hazard. They are well read in the lighter branches of literature, and in modern works, such as are to be had at a book club. They—at least, Helen—can gather up the substance of a review or magazine in a surprising short space of time. She can write lively verses and epigrams ; and sings—especially songs of a comic turn—with great ease and spirit. She has so good a voice, and so much style, that I was vexed to hear such want of cultivation and taste, and very soon I undertook her as my pupil, and am to give her a lesson once a week. She is rather an intractable learner at present, but very amusing,

laughing over all my instruction, and saying she is too old to go to school; however she is improving, and I hope the practice will insensibly act on her manner and speech. I wish you could see them all—no, I do not know that I do quite yet; (*you are more fastidious than I am!*) but I was about to say, if you could see them, you would find their warm-heartedness and frankness atone for the small defects which the world visits so harshly, except these defects happen to be gilded over by wealth or fashion; in which case people may be tenfold more vulgar and common within and without than any market-woman. I wish you could only see and hear Lady Fowler! “the leader of the *haut ton*,” as the papers call her. With my half wish about the Boltons, and my whole wish about Lady Fowler, I conclude, &c. &c.

N. B. One charming piece of frankness I have never mentioned to you; indeed, it was *that* quite attracted me to the Boltons from the first. The second time I saw them, they told me all sorts of silly reports they had heard of me, and confessed how they had been prejudiced; I thought it so pleasant and kind of them. I suppose these tales came through the Sidneys, your good cousins, some way or other—perhaps the servants—not the Groves, certainly, who, if I were a dragon, would be mute, for Henry’s sake.

How often it happens, when there is any thing of prejudice or restraint between parties, that circumstances occur, so as to fix pre-conceived notions. Either the individuals are made to view each other through an unusual or unfortunate medium, or conversation happens to be started, just calculated to bring out points of difference,

almost insurmountable. It was just so with Louisa and the Groves, or rather Mrs. Grove. It may be remembered that Louisa was not at home on their first call, but they met the following Friday, when Louisa returned it, in company with her husband, and when all together went down to the school. It so happened, that a little girl had misbehaved, and was under punishment. Mrs. Grove approved the correction, and encouraged its being fully carried out. Louisa thought it rather severe; and under a kind feeling, mediated, and obtained a mitigation. Louisa urged her wish of taking a class in the Sunday school; Mrs. Grove rather advised Mrs. Davenport to wait a Sunday or two; she gave no reasons, and Louisa thought Mrs. Grove disapproved of her interference; Mrs. Grove was strong upon enforcing literal repetition from the children; Louisa thought that if they understood, that was sufficient, and that rigidity in this respect, except in hymns, was a waste of time. Mrs. Grove made a great point of needlework, and cared less about writing; Louisa was inclined to reverse the opinion. It was the same in the next meeting, when subjects were more general. Mrs. Grove thought the poor of their village might be very well off, if they were tolerably provident; Louisa thought it impossible that with the utmost care and providence they could live upon the wages they had. Mrs. Grove approved small schools; Louisa, large ones. Mrs. Grove was decidedly against getting up petitions or addresses, in such a village as theirs; Louisa thought every one should have a voice on really important matters. It was the same on questions of taste and preference. Mrs. Grove liked gardening; Louisa detested it. Mrs. Grove loved and admired infants; Louisa thought them the most un-

attractive and unlovely of mortals. Mrs. Grove disliked teaching; Louisa delighted in every employment of that nature. Differences of this sort must appear, whatever may be the circumstances of intercourse, and, according to the temper of the individuals, they become serious obstacles towards intimacy or not. But other accidents—before alluded to—arose, to assist impressions already made.

Some of the young Groves were taking lessons in drawing, and every week had to go to the neighbouring town, some eight miles distant, for the purpose. When this plan began, Mr. Davenport had requested that the young people would make use of his pony phaeton, which was a more convenient vehicle for them than their papa's. Louisa was particularly anxious that this arrangement should continue, and mentioned it to Mrs. Grove, in her first call. This carriage was the one that best pleased Louisa, on account of its having the least pretensions. The first Monday, it went with the Groves, as usual. The next, Louisa had to take up her husband, and make a call on the lady with a title before her name; and in her especial desire to use her favourite carriage, it quite escaped her, that Monday was the day the carriage was pre-engaged. She ordered it early, and the coachman, though having general directions concerning the pony phaeton on Mondays, sent in to enquire, "which carriage;" Louisa's memory did not come to her aid; she again sent word, "the pony phaeton," which accordingly drove round at one o'clock,—the hour of departure, for the Groves as well.

Meanwhile, Mr. Grove's man came down, as usual, for the carriage; and there was a grand consultation in the

stable department, what to do. Some thought it a forget of their mistress's, and suggested bringing Mrs. Evans into their council ; but Mrs. Evans was gone down with some dainties to nurse Kettlethwaite, who was more ailing than usual ; Mr. Davenport also was absent, and every moment was of value, so Thomas returned to the Parsonage, to make the best of it he could.

Louisa was standing at the window when the carriage drove round, and in a desultory mood, thinking, as she looked upon it, "What a pity, that a carriage that holds four, should be wasted upon me alone." In a moment, the thought of her husband's consideration for the young Groves came into her head, and with it, the remembrance that the day was Monday. She was grieved, and ran down stairs, quite excited, desiring the man to drive that instant to the Parsonage, hoping it would not be too late ; she then ordered the despised larger carriage for herself. Before she was off, she had the mortification of seeing the little phaeton return, with the news that the young gentlemen had gone to Foremouth, in their papa's carriage.

"Young *gentlemen* !" thought Louisa, "that is a delicate mode of telling me that Lucy stayed at home, and let her younger brothers and sister go."

Louisa's vexation was very sincere ; she made a confession of her forget to her husband, as soon as they met, in terms he thought fully equal to the occasion ; and she made every atonement that words could make, to Mrs. Grove and her party.

The following Monday, a heavy storm of thunder and lightning came on, just as the party from the Parsonage ought to have started, and the phaeton was not wanted.

The week afterwards, Mr. Reynolds, the drawing-master, sent word that he was too ill to see pupils; and the next Monday, an aunt of Mrs. Grove's was passing by Chadleigh, and wrote word that she would stop by the way for a night, and take a peep at them all; it was therefore not deemed expedient to send so many out of the way at that moment. This Monday closed the series of lessons for the season: the pony phaeton, therefore, was not once needed after Louisa's mistake.

The other incident was on a still more domestic subject. During a change in Mr. Grove's dairy, his family had been supplied with milk and cream from Branstone, for the latter part of Mr. Davenport's absence from home. Louisa heard this, and begged it might continue. Mrs. Grove had acquiesced with thanks, saying the permission would be especially acceptable just now, and that they would send down as usual. After two days, however, the messenger ceased to appear, and Louisa never heard any more on the subject. These two things together, made her conclude that Mrs. Grove was either offended with her for the mistake, or wished to make a difference between the mode of proceedings, before and after the arrival of a lady at the Park.

Without a word passing, Mr. Davenport perceived the restraint there was between the parties. He regretted it, but hoped that time would set matters right: he was more vexed at Louisa having committed herself, as she foretold, by *manner*, in the Bolton quarter. This seemed a less remediable step, but he bore it well; and if he saw more clearly the risk a man runs, who marries a wife too young, he had the consolation of sweet qualities—buds of hope and flowers of promise—constantly before his eyes,

to remind him how much a man may lose by marrying a wife too old. Extremes must seek comfort by extremes ; and though Mr. Davenport was a sensible man, probably he thought of no medium at this point in his career. He might defer that till his Louisa was on the list of incurables.

CHAPTER XI.

IN the course of time Louisa became more or less better acquainted with the families in the place, and heard accounts from each of each other, especially of the Groves and Boltons, who were always mentioned together. These accounts were of course modified and coloured according to the views and characters of the reporters. One of her conversations with Miss Hale may serve to throw light on the mode by which Louisa formed her judgments.

Mr. Davenport had a periodical business engagement in London, and at this time, a few weeks after she had been at Branstone, Louisa was alone for a week. It was on the first of these lonely days that Louisa made a call at the Hollies. Miss Hale was at home with her niece, Esther Frampton, and both were full of enquiries about Mr. Davenport, and laments at his lady's solitary condition. It was the first time that there had been any opportunity of a talk, since Louisa had heard that a niece of Miss Hale's was acquainted with Brinksworth.

"Who's that, my dear?" cried Miss Hale to Esther, soon after Louisa had been seated.

Miss Frampton ran to the window, and announced that it was Stephen Bolton and his wife, in their new gig.

"He is stopping to speak to Laurence," said Miss Hale, as she rose to reconnoitre. "Oh, Mrs. Davenport, you

must indeed come and look at this young couple ; they are the flower of the neighbourhood,—dashing young people indeed ! He is such a handsome young man, and she the most fashionable woman in the neighbourhood. And she dresses so expensively ; she has even her morning gowns made up in London. See what a sweet bonnet she has got ! Oh, now they are gone before you got a glimpse of them. Oh, how sorry I am !”

Louisa felt annoyed, and more so when she found she was about to say, “ He is nothing but a farmer, is he ?” “ What could I have meant to say ?” thought she, but the next moment she was satisfied in remembering that she had rather a prepossession against this young man on account of his having distressed his mother, and had no objection to show indifference towards him.

Miss Hale continued, “ Ah, he’s a sad fellow, though ! no credit to his family at all. He has cost his mother no end of money. How she could stand it, I don’t know. And now he and his little wife are so extravagant, that things can’t go on so long ;—I am always expecting a break down there. He gave £100. the other day for a horse, which next week he sold for two-pence. And his gig, to be sure, must be built in London !—Every thing must be of the very best for the young Boltons !”

“ Yet, after all, they do not do things what I call genteelly,” observed Esther ; “ I was surprised to see Mrs. Stephen with the baby in her lap, in a gig,—so very odd ! I am sure we should never do such a thing at Humber-down.”

“ Then it is you who know Brinksworth,” cried Louisa, starting at the sound of a well known name.

"Oh, dear, yes, very well," replied Miss Frampton, "we were all born there."

"And it is your family of whom I have heard as living near Brinksworth."

"Yes," returned Esther, eagerly, "I remember you there very well; and don't you, Mrs. Davenport, remember meeting my brother?"

"Mr. Frampton?" asked Louisa, in a tone of enquiry; and added, after considering, "No, indeed I do not, I remember no one of that name."

"Oh, indeed I think you must remember him, he knows you very well," continued Esther; "and you must know papa's house, on the right hand side of the road turning down Humberdown lane."

"Oh, I remember that house well," replied Louisa, "but I did not know it was your papa's, nor that I had ever met any of your family. I do not think I ever happened to hear the name mentioned."

"Didn't you think Brinksworth a beautiful place?" asked Miss Frampton; "the house so fine, and the grounds so well laid out, for a small place."

"I do not care much for houses and grounds," replied Louisa, in rather an off-hand manner.

"No, certainly, they are quite secondary," observed Esther, "and particularly with such charming society as at Brinksworth. What a sweet woman Lady Georgina is!"

"Are you acquainted with my sister-in-law?" said Louisa, surprised at not having heard this before.

"Not intimately," returned Esther, "you know her Ladyship's health prevents her going out much."

"Ah," cried Louisa, "that was not the case while I

was there. I knew Lady Georgina went out on my account ; she was always talking of my being dull. I often wished her to let me stay at home with her."

Here the aunt and niece exchanged glances ; but before the subject could be pursued, Laurence Bolton opened the door, and in a boyish manner summoned Esther to come along with him and join the fun at the Close, adding, that Stephen and his wife had just arrived, and his sisters had sent for Esther. Esther very readily obeyed, and both immediately left.

"A sweet youth that is," said Miss Hale, "as soon as Laurence had closed the door ; "it is a thousand pities his destination is changed. His poor mother is nearly heart-broken. I know she would deny herself, and even her poor girls, every comfort, if she could manage by so doing to send that poor boy to college."

"Perhaps she will, after all," said Louisa, feeling rather awkward after what she heard one day at the Close ; "Mrs. Bolton has good property, has she not ? and all her other sons are established."

"Her other sons have been, and still are, a great expense to her," replied Miss Hale ; "I am sure I often wonder how she has stood it ; she, a widow, with such a family,—eleven children."

Louisa had no idea there were so many, and Miss Hale enumerated them all. Besides those Louisa knew, there were, in Miss Hale's words, "Edward, who has given his mother great trouble, and who is now, I suspect, a constant drain upon her,—always writing for money. Then Nelson, who was always intended for the navy, and who is at sea now ;—William, in an attorney's office ;—little Bob, whom you know ; and Agnes, the youngest of all,

now at school. What a family!" continued Miss Hale; "the loss of the living was a sad disappointment to them; Mr. Bolton's death was quite unexpected; and it was always thought that Stephen would go into the church, and succeed his father some day."

"It could not have been a very great help to such a family," replied Louisa; "it is a mere trifle; besides, you see the eldest son has married, and the living would have done no good in that way to his father's family."

"You talk of such a living being a trifle," returned Miss Hale, smiling, "but *we* do not think that. Mr. Grove, I fancy, does not think it a trifle, though he has not near such a large family, and has his wife's connexions to apply to, whenever he needs help."

"I thought Mrs. Grove's family had never helped them in any way," said Louisa.

"So some say," replied Miss Hale, smiling, "but I have reasons for thinking quite otherwise. Mrs. Grove used to have some of the children and the governess from her brother's, months in the house; and do you suppose such things as these would go on without remuneration?"

"Indeed I do not know," said Louisa; "I never should have thought of such a thing."

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Davenport," cried Miss Hale, laughing, "you do not understand such matters. I have no doubt myself that both Horace and Harry have been helped in their education by the Savorys,—no doubt in the world!"

"If they were, it would only be quite proper," said Louisa.

"Oh, certainly," replied Miss Hale, "quite proper,—it is entirely according to my views; only when people are

so helped, I do not like to see them expect more, and take from those who need it more,—I cannot bear grasping ways.”

“Do you mean Mr. Grove?” asked Louisa; “he is the last man in the world to be called grasping, I should think. How freely he gives away!—no one would think he had not abundance.”

“Oh, I would not say a word against Mr. Grove,” said Miss Hale; “I respect him, and think him a most worthy man: but he is not a man of the world, and his simplicity causes him easily to be led. He, poor man, I am sure, means no injustice; it is natural that he should be ready to close with any proposal that seems to the advantage of his family; though I am sure he would be the last to do so, if he knew his boy’s fortune was built upon the ruin of another.”

“Really!” cried Louisa, “I do not understand all this; I have not the least idea what it is you allude to.”

“Oh, surely you know!—I hope I am doing no mischief,” exclaimed Miss Hale; “I thought you would be the first to know all these affairs.”

“No, I do not know; but do not tell me any thing I ought not to know,” said Louisa, a little alarmed, she hardly knew why, at listening to histories from Miss Hale.

“Oh, there is no sort of secret in the case,” returned Miss Hale; “every body knows, and I have no doubt you do, only you may not remember. It is about Mr. Davenport sending Harry Grove to college.”

Louisa felt there was something particularly uncomfortable in discussing such a matter in such a manner, and was silent a space.

Miss Hale continued, “I am sure I am rejoiced at it,

for the poor boy's sake ; he is a great favourite of mine,—I think him the flower of the family ; but I have an old-fashioned feeling of justice, and the more I wish well to poor Harry, the less I would wish to see him made to rise upon the wreck of another ; especially when that other has been undoubtedly more to be pitied than blamed. Poor boy ! he takes it so meekly ; it goes to my heart every time I see him ;—such a fall !”

“What ! you mean Laurence Bolton, I suppose,” cried Louisa ; “do you think he cares so very much for it ?”

“I am certain of it,” replied Miss Hale, confidently ; “the fact is, Laurence was never a great favourite of mine,—I used to think him boisterous ; but his character has come out so unexpectedly under this trial, that I quite love the boy. Then his talents are far superior to Harry's : Harry is a good-humoured fellow, but has no application ; but Laurence never came home without bringing back prizes of handsome books, as a mark of the approbation of his masters. Harry undoubtedly is the pleasantest youth ; but there is more depth in Laurence's reserve than one thinks for at first. He is a boy *I* would not give up, without thinking twice about it :—and his poor mother ! I am sure, for her sake, I would not do any thing hasty. It is such a sad thing for boys to have no father. While boys have a father, and especially one who is a scholar, I never can pity them much ; they may have a few rubs in early life, but they are sure to do well,—don't you think so, Mrs. Davenport ?”

Here Miss Hale paused, and Louisa felt—what some young ladies in her place, whether married or single, never feel—unequal to give a judgment in the case. Louisa was practical ; she felt a disinclination to give opinions

absolutely on guess, and her inexperience made her feel as if her mind was a perfect blank, when thus appealed to. She had found this painfully since her marriage; for though in the position of one older than her age before, her difficulties in that respect had been increased by her change of situation. Mrs. Davenport was expected to decide upon every thing; and already she had found that Mrs. Davenport's words and Mrs. Davenport's opinions, had spread far and wide,—sometimes much to her inconvenience. Besides, Louisa, in daily contact with one her superior, was beginning to suspect the infallibility of her own judgment. These reasons alone were teaching her reserve and caution. She was, too, though without entering so much into her own motives, constantly guided by her husband's counsel to her, not to commit herself; and, influenced by all these considerations, she now was glad to avail herself of the first opportunity that offered, for putting an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER XII.

"FREDERICK Frampton came to his aunt's last night, and will be here presently," said Margaret, one morning, after she had been out in the village.

"What a ridiculous young man he is!" exclaimed Helen, "one never knows his plans. He left without cause, and now he comes back again without cause."

"It does not follow it is without cause, because we are ignorant of it," said Margaret, laughing.

"Why, what cause can there be to influence him at present?" asked Helen,—“a young man who has no business with any soul in the world.”

"Well, he ought to have business, we know," replied her sister. "He is amusing enough, but it is a disgrace to see him idling away his time, while his family are all so troubled about him."

"Well, better idle away his time than pretend to undertake business he has no taste for, and throw away money as well as reproaches," observed Helen.

"That sounds plausible, Helen," said Margaret, "but it will not do while he throws away money as well as time and reproaches, as he does now. Miss Hale is miserable about him."

"Then why does Miss Hale encourage him in all the idling that goes on—I should like to know?" said Helen.

"She sent for him to join our gipsying party the other day. He did not care about coming, any more than we did about seeing him ; but she would have been put out if he had not played his part as he did."

"I think he *does* care about coming among us, Helen," returned her sister, "and I think you must take care of yourself."

"Nonsense !" cried Helen, "as if my heart were not made of stouter stuff than to resist the charms of Mr. Frederick Frampton."

"Well, I am glad to hear you say so," replied Margaret, "for I am sure I don't know what you two would have to live upon, except you can get now and then a meal off of quarrelling."

"Or upon bounces and flams, as Laurence calls them," added Helen.

"Well, quite as substantial food as love and romance," observed Eliza.

"Eliza never speaks, I observe," said Emma, who was occupied as usual in her usual situation on the sofa, "Eliza never speaks but when there is an opportunity of making a remark that exposes her folly."

"Then Eliza's opportunities are rare," added Helen, quickly, "which, according to the proverb, proves her wisdom rather than her folly."

"Well, I confess," returned Emma, "it *would* be folly in you or Eliza to look out for a husband who could live upon love. *He* would be starved, and *you* would die for want of bickerings."

"Well, I would be content to match my husband against yours, Emma," said Helen, laughing ; "we

should be tigers, always at play,—you doves, always fighting.”

“Tigers at play till they draw blood—what then follows?” asked Emma; “and doves fighting—with what weapons?”

“With the weapons human doves have always at command—the tongue,” returned Helen.

“Now all this is silly enough,” cried Margaret, interposing; “and here comes one,—whether tiger or dove, you must determine.”

“No more dove than Benedict, which he is so fond of calling himself,” said Helen, as, with some little difficulty, she stepped on to the lawn from a window not exactly calculated for the purpose of an exit.

Mr. Frampton at almost the same moment entered the room, and, after a somewhat hurried greeting, exclaimed, “What, my lady Disdainful, my fair Beatrice, escaped me, as usual!” and in half an instant he was by Helen’s side on the lawn.

“Who bade you come here, Mr. Frederick?” said she; “go back, I am about to tie up my flowers.”

“Sweet the ties bound by fair hands,” said Mr. Frampton; “let me be the humble page—the mere Caliban, if it so please, my lady Disdain.”

“Nothing you can do will please me, Mr. Frampton,” said Helen, walking on.

“And nothing you can say can displease me,” continued Mr. Frampton, following, “so long as I may follow, and you allow yourself my lady Disdain.”

“But you may not follow, Mr. Frederick; I say, return to the house, and leave me; you are very troublesome.”

"That is my vocation," returned the gentleman, "else, wherefore am I Benedict?"

"Now do go away and leave me to myself, Mr. Frampton," said Helen, again.

"No, no, I shall follow you through maze and haze," persisted Mr. Frampton; "I am bound to the service of the lady Beatrice."

"Nonsense, Mr. Frederick!" cried Helen, pettishly, "I wish you would have done with such stuff!"

"Then you must not remind me of it by ever being the bright Beatrice," said Mr. Frampton.

Helen stood still and laughed. The gentleman stood still too.—"No," said he, presently, "that will not do. I am by your side: where you go, I go. If you want me to return to the house, you have but to lead: your wish is fulfilled."

"You are so tiresome," cried Helen, turning however towards the house, which after a short time they re-entered.

"I really wish you would prevent Mr. Frederick from following me," cried Helen to her sisters, as she came into the room, "he is always so troublesome."

"You are the only one to do that, Helen," said Margaret, laughing.

"Then Miss Helen must formally resign her character of Beatrice," said Mr. Frampton.

"Well, I do, Mr. Frederick," returned the young lady, "I have told you hundreds of times that I wish you would have done with that nonsense."

"Yes, but that does not change your nature or your wit," continued the gentleman; "you must cease being my lady Disdain."

"That I cannot while you are near," replied Helen.

And so the contest went on, till Margaret broke into it by saying abruptly, "Well, Mr. Frampton, "what do you say now? You hear, of course, that instead of being enlightened, and seeing things as you predicted, we only become more and more charmed with our bride every day."

"Wait! wait!" cried Mr. Frampton, "Rome was not built in a day, nor is every fine lady to be known in the same space."

"Well," returned Helen, "if we have to wait the same space, I suppose Mrs. Davenport's popularity has a chance of lasting our time."

"She is particularly in favour just now," said Margaret; "for Mr. Davenport is away, and she is so affable and pleasant, we see her every day. To-night, she said she would come down to tea."

"Then you will lose the pleasure of the company of your humble servant," said Mr. Frampton; "I would not be a restraint, and I could not be myself with your fine friend."

"And who will miss you,—I should like to know?" said Helen.

"My fair lady Disdain, at least, will miss her mark," observed Mr. Frampton, laughing at his own wit.

"Her mark must be a nonentity, if she misses it," said Helen, scornfully.

Esther here came in hastily, charging her brother with having given her the slip. She had been seeking him high and low, she said, for half an hour, and at last, guessed how it might be.

Mr. Frampton laughed heartily, but said something

about "attractions," and "nonentities," which sounded uncommonly like a pointed compliment to some quarter or other.

Esther explained the plan they proposed for the evening, and learned the difficulty that had just been started; "Oh, nonsense, Fred," said she, "that is carrying your resentment too far; come, you must forget and forgive. Mrs. Davenport was a girl then; she would behave better now."

Margaret and Eliza also joined their entreaties, and urged the consideration of peace upon Mr. Frampton; but Mr. Frampton was inexorable.

Some one proposed framing and sending up an excuse to Mrs. Davenport for not receiving her that evening, as it could not signify to her, and did so much to all of themselves; but Helen would not hear of this. Emma also took this side strongly.

"Oh, then," said Esther, "you must some of you come to us; we shall be so dull, and Fred will be as cross as two sticks. Helen, you can come; now do, there's a good girl."

"I!" cried Helen, "I dare say! and pray why am *I* to come?"

"Because you make all things lively; and they do not want you here, and we do."

"Well, I will come to you to-morrow," said Helen.

"To-morrow! you teasing girl," cried Esther, "to-morrow Fred will be gone!"

"Well, I shall not come to-day, Esther," said Helen, "so there's an end of it."

"Then, Eliza, do you come."

"As second best!" cried Eliza, "I dare say! no, no; you should have asked me first!"

"Nobody calls you *second*," said Esther; "nobody thinks of such a thing, I am sure. Fred, tell Eliza that nobody calls her second!" cried Esther, distressed; but her brother was gazing out in another direction, and seemed not to hear or heed the appeal.

Esther was silent, and at a loss what to do. She lived upon company and talk, and could not but look upon her failure as a severe disappointment. "Aunt will be so vexed and angry," said she; "a fine cross evening we shall have;—Aunt complaining of every thing,—Fred sulky or asleep,—and I, with nobody to speak to!"

Helen laughed heartily. "I should like to see you," cried she.

"Then come, dear Helen; pray do," continued Miss Frampton, imploringly.

But Helen was as firm as Mr. Frampton.

At length, Esther exclaimed, "Well, I declare, there is not a good-natured one among you; and I'll go home and say so."

"Do," replied Helen, laughing; while, to the surprise of all, Emma rose up and said, "No, you shall not say that; *I* will come."

Very warm were Esther's exclamations of thanks, while her brother politely complimented the new ally on her temper, and, in a neat speech, compared her to Serena. After all was settled, the brother and sister left."

"Simpleton, you are, Emma!" cried Helen; "he did not care for having *you*!"

"Perhaps *he* is not my mark, Helen," returned Emma.

Helen coloured, and protested, neither was *he* her's.

"So much the better," said Emma, coolly.

In the evening, Louisa made her appearance at the Close, as arranged, and came armed with her work. Nothing could be more complete than the group, as a needle-work party, except that two of the Miss Boltons did not get through as many as half a dozen stitches the whole evening.

Louisa was of a character and age, to urge the conversation upon topics rather above the average intellect of the minds she usually came in contact with. This she did unconsciously, and without effort. As Mrs. Davenport, in the village of Chadleigh, her mode was more than tolerated,—it was highly popular; as Miss Robinson, in a different society, it was most unacceptable, and was, in a great measure, the secret of her unpopularity: but Louisa had become familiar, if not intimate, with the Boltons; and when that was the case, she could never be at a loss for topics, or restrained in their discussion."

"What beautiful scissars!" cried Eliza, as she was examining the contents of Louisa's box; "what taper points, and what a fine polish! I never saw any thing so beautiful!"

"Since I have been at Chadleigh," said Louisa, laughing, "I have never looked upon them without thinking of Miss Grove."

"Lucy Grove! why?" asked Eliza; "what has she to do with them?"

"Nothing at all," replied Louisa; "only I think they are so like her."

"Like her!" cried Eliza; "how can scissars be like her—like a person? what can you mean?"

"Oh, do you never fancy such things?" said Louisa;

"I often see likenesses, in every thing. I have been watching that graceful bird of yours, ever since I have been in the room. In movements and manner, it is so like a friend of mine."

"Oh, Mrs. Davenport, what an idea!" "Oh, Louisa!" "My dear, you have the strangest notions," cried the daughters and mother, at once; and Margaret continued, "Well, I can better fancy a bird being like a person, than a pair of scissars, or any thing of that kind."

"Yes," added Eliza, "how can these scissars be like Lucy Grove?"

"Cannot you see in a moment?" cried Louisa, displaying them; "they are slender and delicate,—elegant in form and movement;—then there is about them a soft dark brilliancy, very like that about her."

"Well, it is the queerest idea!" observed Helen; "but I can fancy it. Look now," continued she, taking up a ball of cotton, and several other articles, one after another, "that is Mr. Page; and that, Mrs. Brandram; and that, is Sophy Harris;" last of all, making an old pair of broken scissars walk along the table, "and that, old nurse Kettlethwaite."

Louisa attempted, in vain, to get in a word, amid the laugh which these resemblances occasioned, and she was forced to let the mirth take its own course; while all the sisters ranged the table and the room for similes; and Louisa heard the names of several of their acquaintances, and her acquaintances in the neighbourhood, whom they did not know, mentioned in a manner that annoyed her.

At length, as the merriment was abating, Louisa said, "But I do not wish to find unpleasing resemblances; I think beautiful images so much more agreeable."

"Oh, fie, fie, Louisa," cried Helen, "surely you don't call any resemblance of Miss Hale or Mrs. Grove, unpleasing! I did not think you were so severe!"

"I made no resemblance," replied Louisa; "I should find very different similes from yours."

"Yes, that I am sure of," said Helen; "for instance, I should never have found those beautiful scissars like Lucy Grove; she is not at all a pretty girl,—nobody would call her so."

"She has a grace and brightness about her, which stands for positive beauty in my eyes," said Louisa.

"Oh, how can you say so!" cried Helen; "such mean little features—such an ugly nose! and so thin, too! I never heard her called pretty before."

"We look upon Lucy differently from strangers, my dear," observed Mrs. Bolton; "we have seen her grow up, and forget that she is now a young woman to others. I often think Lucy may be admired by some."

"Oh, to be sure," cried Louisa, warmly; "I love to watch her; it is my chief pleasure, when I call there; she never speaks,—I do not want her to speak, I am afraid of her breaking the illusion;—but I like to follow her movements, and even the turn of her countenance."

"Well, how very odd!" said Helen; "but you are right in not wishing to hear her speak, and she is right in being as silent as she is, for she is a child—a mere child—and has no more sense than when she was a baby; her mamma has kept her so strict; she has scarcely been out of the house and garden till the last year."

"Poor thing! I quite pity her," continued Margaret; "such seclusion is not good for young people; and it has made her so shy and timid! I do believe she is often

ready to cry where she ought to laugh. Clever men have such odd whims in bringing up their children."

"Nay, Margaret," said Helen, "it is not a *man's* whim, it is a woman's. Mrs. Grove has had the entire management of her daughters' education."

"Oh, Mrs. Grove is a most tiresome formal woman!" cried Eliza; "I have no patience with her; nobody can bear her! I know, Louisa, you cannot endure Mrs. Grove!"

"I!" cried Louisa, colouring from more causes than one; "I!—what can make you think so? I am sure I never said so!"

"Never said so," remarked Helen, "but one can tell such things pretty well. Our *Furioso*," added she, pointing to the bird and laughing, "never told me he disliked pussey, but, fierce as he is, I suppose I am not far off when I shrewdly suspect that to be the case."

"My dear Helen," said her mother, "you should not let your spirits get the better of you."

Helen replied; while Louisa answered her remark by saying, "If any one has to complain of your illustration, it is the person compared to *Furioso*."

At this moment the door opened, and to the surprise of the family, Miss Hale appeared. "Ah, my dears!" cried she, "I knew I should surprise you! The young people are gone walking this beautiful evening, but I declined, I was tired out with the heat of the day. We had tea early, and I thought I would step down and get another cup—especially as I knew what good company you had got here," looking at Louisa.—"Nothing like selfishness, Mrs. Davenport!"

"Come, sit down, Miss Hale," said Eliza, "we wanted

you ; we are never complete without you. I thought it very cross of Esther and her brother to keep you away."

Miss Hale acknowledged the compliment.

"Oh," continued Eliza, "Louisa has been making us laugh so ! She has been comparing all sorts of things to people, and so we have been talking them over. We were talking of Mrs. Grove when you opened the door."

"And I am sure you could not talk of a worthier woman," said Miss Hale, "a most excellent woman ! I know no where such a mother—present company always excepted—so devoted to her family !"

"Dear Mrs. Grove !" said Mrs. Bolton, "I consider her perfection ; her heart is always in her duties."

"One never can find Mrs. Grove at fault," continued Miss Hale, "I suppose she never did or said any thing to be blamed in her whole life."

"This is very unlike what you said just now," observed Louisa to Eliza.

"Oh, it may be all as they say," interposed Helen, "and yet it may be true that nobody can bear Mrs. Grove.—What is more detestable than perfection ?"

"My dear Helen," said her mother, "consider what you are saying !"

"Now, Miss Hale," continued Helen, "just tell me—you shall tell me !—say, is not Mrs. Grove formal and precise, and very disagreeable ?"

"Helen ! Helen !" cried Miss Hale, laughing, "you are a bad girl ; you are really too bad !"

Helen continued to press, and Miss Hale at length said, "We all must have our faults. Nobody, not even Mrs. Grove, is perfect."

"But you said she was perfect just now," observed Louisa.

"Oh," cried Helen, "that is only the way people speak when they think a person intolerable. Come, now, Miss Hale, answer me, is not Mrs. Grove formal and precise?"

"You are a sly girl, Helen," replied Miss Hale, "but I shall not please you. I should only say that Mrs. Grove is more precise and rigid in her notions than I am. I do not like a family kept up as hers has been. I like young people to enjoy themselves, though I think certainly Mrs. Grove has brought up her family admirably in the main; quite admirably."

"Well, that I am sure she has," said Mrs. Bolton, "only I do wish they would come among us a little more. Lucy we hardly ever see now."

"That is an old story," said Miss Hale, "and is not likely to be changed. No, no, we are not high enough for Miss Lucy; she has a touch of her mother's pride of birth."

"Well, I should be much better satisfied if that was the reason," said Helen, "but it is not. The Groves were intimate enough with the Hodges,—there was no pride of birth there; we are not *good* enough for Miss Lucy, that is the reason."

"The Groves never have visited much, have they?" said Louisa, who felt uncomfortable in having to listen to such free remarks on her husband's friends; "I understood they declined it generally."

"Yes, they choose to plead poverty," said Miss Hale, "but others, who are not very rich, can manage to give their friends a cup of tea now and then."

"You remember what Crosspatch did, however," said Helen, laughing, "and perhaps she has her followers."

"For my part I never can understand some poor people," said Miss Hale; "here is Mr. Grove,—lives like a gentleman, keeps a stylish looking carriage, gives his children the first of educations—no expense spared—has friends with them whenever it suits them, is able to give away like a prince, and yet we are all called upon to believe him a poor man. I do not understand such poverty."

"You forget one item," said Helen, "and an important one—dress—how they all dress! I don't believe they ever put on an old thing."

"Then it must be because their things never grow old," cried Margaret, laughing; "I am sure, Helen, I have heard you call some of Mrs. Grove's dresses and bonnets tiresome evergreens, and count up the number of seasons you have seen them."

"Well, no wonder," said Helen, "what business have poor people with fine silks and satins? I am sure mamma never thinks of wearing a satin dress."

"My dears," said Miss Hale, "your mamma must not be compared to any body. She sacrifices all to her children, and that you know well enough."

"Ah, Miss Hale!" cried Mrs. Bolton, smiling, "now you are getting into your flattery vein; but I shall not allow that; and see, here is tea, ready to help us to something better."

Tea soon followed, and talk of the same sort occupied the rest of the evening; the best comment upon which, as well as on previous scenes, will be a conversation between Louisa and her husband, after his return from London.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOUISA had been giving an history of her proceedings, in return for her husband's account of his adventures during their separation ; and ended with, "So, you see, I have not much to tell."

Mr. Davenport remarked that she had been more in the world than he had.

"Yes, I know I was out a great deal," replied Louisa ; "but people were so kind, and thought I must be lonely, or I met them in the village ; but I like that easy way of going out, better than regular visiting. By the bye, Henry, I find I was perfectly ignorant of all the circumstances of every body here,—those of the Boltons, especially. I had no idea they were such a large family, and that Mrs. Bolton had been at so much trouble and expense with her sons ; had you ?"

Mr. Davenport replied in the affirmative.

"Yes, I know you must know about Laurence," continued Louisa, "but why have you not told me this, and other things ?"

"Because it did not exactly come into my head, I suppose," replied Mr. Davenport.

"But, really, Henry, I think you have been rather hard on poor Laurence ; and they say he feels your displeasure so deeply ; he can scarcely look me in the face."

"He does not feel it deep enough to make one exertion to remove it," returned Mr. Davenport; "the fact is, he does not wish to go to college."

"Oh, indeed, they say so differently," cried Louisa; "I was so interested for him, that if your grave looks had not sprung up before me two or three times, I should have committed myself to his mother; but I don't know what you will say to me, Henry, for I have committed myself—to myself."

"Well, and what have you bound yourself to do?"

"You know, Henry, you told me I might do just as I pleased with the money settled on me, and that you would not interfere," said Louisa, in an appealing tone.

Mr. Davenport assented.

Louisa continued, "Well, I want to send young Bolton to college myself; what will it cost?"

Mr. Davenport mentioned a sum sufficient; he apologized for its amount, but said if Louisa did the thing at all, she must do it handsomely.

"Oh," cried Louisa, "I can manage that very well;—it will be three years; it will not be wanted all at once."

"You ought to consider if it is the best way of laying out such a sum," observed Mr. Davenport; "the best way, even for the youth himself."

"Why you mean to do the same for Harry Grove," returned Louisa, quickly, "and every body says he is not half as studious as Laurence; indeed, he does not seem so. I do wonder, Henry, that you think so much more of the Groves than the Boltons; and Mrs. Bolton a widow, with such a family."

"In a pecuniary light," returned Mr. Davenport, smiling, "I do not know that Mrs. Bolton being a widow,

is injurious to her family ; or affects an income which is three times as large as the other you allude to."

"I had no idea of that, by the way people talk," said Louisa ; but are you sure, Henry ? Then you know the Groves have such rich connexions, and are always being helped ; but the poor Boltons have nobody to look to but themselves ; that makes such a great difference. I know that you have helped them a little, and by Mrs. Bolton's grateful manner of alluding to you, suspect you have more ; but that is not like wealthy relations, who can drop about gold, in all shapes and forms, round their own natural friends."

Mr. Davenport smiled. "I fancy," said he, "the gold that has been lavished on the Groves', has always assumed the form of sweet words and empty compliments ; or rather, perhaps, of profuse thanks ; for if gold has been dropped about at all, it is on the other side."

"Oh, Henry, that seems quite impossible!" cried Louisa.

"Impossible, yet true, I fancy," returned her husband ; "I look upon Grove as the poorest man I know."

"Very gentleman-like poverty," said Louisa, smiling.

"And not the less trying for that," replied her husband, gravely.

"But then you do so much to help him," said Louisa.

"There you are quite mistaken, Louisa," returned Mr. Davenport ; "the only way I have ever assisted him is by loans now and then, and these he always repays me. I never gave them any thing outright but that useless little carriage, which it always vexes me to look upon. The fact is, I am ashamed of doing no more ; but it is the

hardest thing in the world to know how to help him ; he never seems to want it."

" Well, that is just what every body says, and of course it is easy to account for it, if a man actually does not want it."

" Nonsense, Louisa," said Mr. Davenport, " I know better than that, and I mean at last to act upon what I know. Harry is my godson, and his mother does not object to my patronage to him, as she did in his brother's case."

" That is just what I should have expected from Mrs. Grove," exclaimed Louisa, " so proud and independent ! Now Mrs. Bolton has none of those feelings, but is simple-hearted and grateful. Besides, Horace has never wanted your assistance. How well he is doing ! they say his scholarship supports him."

" That is one of the assertions of which you must learn to believe a good deal less than half, Louisa," said her husband, smiling ; " but I confess I think Mrs. Grove was right in her decision about Horace. She said he wanted rousing and urging on to exertion, and that nothing would do this so effectually as his knowing that every shilling he spent was taken from the comforts, if not the necessities of his family. She thought he would insensibly lose the sense of the importance of exertion, if he had other resources to look to. I think the result proves her correct ; but I feel the more pledged to assist Harry, who is quite a different character from his brother, besides being my godson."

" But I do not like you to help one youth at the expense of another," observed Louisa ; " and even if I take up Laurence, it is not the same thing."

"My dear Louisa, you really must learn the wisdom of unbelief," replied Mr. Davenport; "it is not worth while to disabuse you of all the stuff you have allowed to be thrust upon you."

"Then you should tell me the state of the whole case, and I should know what to believe and what disbelieve," returned the wife. "Ah, Henry, now I see one of your obstinate faces stealing on, and I know I shall not get another word to-night."

"Then you do well not to expect it," said Mr. Davenport; "and here comes tea to make a change, without any trouble on our parts."

But tea, though it made a diversion, did not change the course of Louisa's thoughts. Her sympathies had been deeply engaged in Mrs. Bolton's trials and sorrows, and she was not satisfied with the result of her attempt to plead the cause of that lady's family with her husband. During tea, therefore, after a pause, she abruptly recurred to their former subject. "But, Henry," said she, looking very persuasive, "Henry, now do you not admire Mrs. Bolton? I do think her such a sweet affectionate person. She seems to love every body and every thing. I never met with any one of her age like her. I can talk to her as if we were equals,—in years, I mean. I prefer her, in a *tête-a-tête* especially, to any of her daughters."

"Then you do see a difference between the mother and daughters?"

"Oh, certainly!" cried Louisa, "there are great faults of manner in the daughters. I really think and hope," added she, somewhat doubtfully, "it is only manner; but I allow it makes me often feel uncomfortable. They are thoughtless, and want judgment; but their mother is

quite different. Though so fond of them, she constantly checks them, and she is a thoroughly serious and religious person. She talks so nicely and sensibly of all the trials of her life."

"What you say is true," replied Mr. Davenport; "I think Mrs. Bolton affectionate and resigned."

"I like your words," returned Louisa, "but not your manner. I dare say you are thinking my praise of Mrs. Bolton is dispraise of Mrs. Grove."

"And I dare say you are thinking the same," said Mr. Davenport.

"Well, I do not see how one can avoid comparing them and their families," returned Louisa, "nor how one can avoid preferring the one to the other."

"You have made a marvellous mistake in discarding Lucy, at any rate."

"Lucy!" cried Louisa, "I have never thought of Lucy, except to admire her appearance. I believe I have been rather afraid of hearing her speak, lest she should dispel a beautiful idea she gave me in silence."

"Well, you ought especially to have taken to Lucy," said Mr. Davenport.

"And why?"

"Because the framework of her mind is so much like your own, that you ought to have discovered it and sympathized with it, if your sympathetic powers were in a healthy state."

"But, Henry," replied Louisa, "it has been quite impossible for me to see or know any thing about Lucy Grove; when I go there, I see her mother; Lucy never speaks; besides, every body says Lucy is a mere child."

"I thought, Louisa," observed her husband, smiling,

that you rather piqued yourself on not recognizing the existence of the 'every body,' to whom you have now appealed more than once or twice."

"But this is a fact," said Louisa, consciously.

"Nay, it is an opinion; the *fact* is, that Lucy is not much more than a year younger than yourself."

"I am sure I do not dislike Lucy," continued Louisa; rather the contrary; I admire her appearance and manners excessively; and she has been often very good-natured and pleasant. I felt quite grateful to her, in that disagreeable affair about the pony phaeton; she was so simple and easy, and set me at rest, while her mamma was so cool and formal, that I felt miserable. Oh, Henry, would be impossible to get on with an angel, with a mother by, like Mrs. Grove!"

"Then it seems that Mrs. Bolton's charms throw a veil over her daughter's defects; and Mrs. Grove's defects, in the same way, eclipse her daughter's virtues."

"You must allow," said Louisa; "that Mrs. Grove is so cold, as stern, as precise, and as wanting in frankness, as Mrs. Bolton is the contrary; any body can see that she rules her children with an iron rod; they look to their father for sympathy and tenderness; how unnatural that is, when there is a mother! Lucy never speaks before her mother, and dare not move or stir without an approving look; Horace, though a man, and his own master, cannot venture to accept an invitation or ring the bell, without the same permission; and the rest are chilled into statues. The house is like a deserted place; one never hears a sound above a whisper; I always feel a damp creep over me as I enter, especially when I remember that half a

dozen unfortunate children are immured within its silent walls."

"Harry, for instance," said Mr. Davenport, drily.

"Harry is a merry light-hearted boy," said Louisa, laughing; "stone walls cannot chill his spirit at present."

"Well, beware, Louisa; the outside of things are often deceptive," observed Mr. Davenport; "we see as imperfectly in one day, family, as individual, feelings and principles. All depends on character and habits; and these may at once upset your present theories and notions."

"But you cannot deny that Mrs. Grove is a frightful disciplinarian," said Louisa; "in the school, in the parish, in her own home, it is all the same; nothing is done in the house without bells; and her own punctuality and regularity, is quite appalling to hear of; now I do not dislike discipline and order, but I do not like to make idols of them, and sacrifice to them all the social virtues."

"You have managed to see a good deal, Louisa, in your formal visits," said her husband, smiling.

"Well, I have," replied Louisa; "I have observed, and there have been abundant opportunities; for Mrs. Grove does not relax her government in compliment to the presence of a stranger: all goes on the same. I really quite pity that poor girl, Janet, who is timid naturally. She seems quite bowed to the earth by her mother's looks."

"Once more, Louisa, I say, beware!" repeated Mr. Davenport; "it is a bold thing for a stranger to attempt to decipher family ways in a morning call."

After a little pause, Louisa continued, "But surely, Henry, you do not mean to take upon yourself to deny

that Mrs. Grove's manners are cool and unprepossessing, and that her character has an independence about it by no means feminine, to say the least of it."

"I should not have expected a complaint of independence of character from Louisa," said Mr. Davenport.

"That is a cowardly mode of parrying my question," cried Louisa, colouring and laughing; "I mean, however, a want of sweetness—of loveableness. Now, as a test: which had you rather be left alone with, Mrs. Bolton, or Mrs. Grove?"

Mr. Davenport laughed. "Without considering either positively dangerous," said he, "I should say Mrs. Grove."

"Oh, Henry, impossible!" exclaimed Louisa, "it must be prejudice—indeed it must. I will try you again,—Mr. or Mrs. Grove?"

"That is not fair; you know Grove has always been my particular friend; I am likely to prefer him."

"I am satisfied with that admission," exclaimed Louisa, with an action of triumph, "it proves you see a difference, and that if you were a woman, you would see Mrs. Grove as I do. I cannot endure such precise goodness—such hopeless perfection."

"Perfection with your list of defects at its heels, is surely somewhat doubtful!"

"Oh, Henry, you know well enough what I mean!" cried Louisa; "Mrs. Grove always does and says exactly what is right and proper—not a word, not a tone, not a smile, out of place—not an action out of taste; and even though I do not agree with her opinions, I see she has a view, and plausible foundations for it. She is a strong-minded, sensible woman, and perfectly invulnerable in all

her duties. She has already disciplined the school into an admirable stillness and order, and is doing the same with the village. She has educated her daughters, and in part her sons, and her household is a model. Though she is so exclusive, nobody can complain of her conduct, or point to a fault; people can only praise, and feel as I do, that perfection is unlovely."

"That is a sentiment unworthy of you, Louisa," said her husband; "I do not like perfection, or Mrs. Grove to be so treated."

"Well, then, Henry," cried Louisa, appealing, "only just say that Mrs. Grove is not perfection!"

"Did I ever say that she was?" asked her husband, drily.

Louisa was thrown back for a moment; then replied, "But really I thought you believed she had no faults. I thought you admired her so very much, and set her up as a model."

"Did I ever talk much of Mrs. Grove?"

"No, certainly not," replied Louisa, "but I fancied so, and every body says so."

"Every body!" echoed Mr. Davenport, drily.

After a pause, Louisa observed, "I have only been afraid you should be unjust, Henry."

"And I am afraid *you* should be unjust, Louisa."

"You are an intolerable old soul, Henry," cried his wife, with a sweet spite, "every bit as disagreeable as any Mrs. Grove can be, and a great deal worse, because you are a man, and add the odiousness of logic to a cool calculating temperament! I wish you were your sister; you would be an agreeable companion then."

"You will be pleased to hear, then," replied Mr. Da-

venport, smiling, "that Clara is waiting for nothing but an invitation from you, to come down to Branstone."

"How silly of her!" cried Louisa, "as if that were necessary. What a pity she did not come down with you!"

Mr. Davenport here explained his sister's plan, which was to pay them a visit of a week or two, with her eldest little boy, Mr. Davenport's godchild, during an absence of her husband on business.

Louisa was delighted with the scheme. "That is just what I like!" cried she, "husbands are troublesome incumbrances; I have half a wish to send you to help Mr. Bligh in his trustee-business, Henry. Next to the misfortune of having one's best friend a man, is having one's friend married. That is Clara's only fault! Alice is the most comfortable person to think of I know; she is neither of the disagreeables."

"Yet, you see, Alice is not the more at your command."

"I know that too well!" sighed Louisa; "that poor grandmother of her's has always stood in the way of my wishes for her; and now I am afraid she will leave Alice all her property."

"There is not much fear of that, I should imagine," said Mr. Davenport, smiling; "my sister tells me that old Phoebe is in the pay of the family, and that she is bound to watch both her mistress and Miss Sidney, and to give immediate notice, if a lawyer is introduced into the house!"

"Poor Alice!" cried Louisa, laughing; "I suppose she would be more alarmed than even Phoebe, at the sight of a lawyer. She knows the feeling among her uncles and

cousins. What a set they are ! not one of them will come down now to see, much less to nurse their grandmother, because they know the will is safe enough, under lock and key, in London. And yet, do you know, Alice is such a creature, that though she is aware of all this, and things a thousand times worse, she speaks of them as if they were good sort of people, to be treated with respect."

"You know they are her relations."

"I mean she really *feels* a sort of respect for them, which provokes me," continued Louisa.

"Well, my dear Louisa," said her husband, "some day you shall be Queen of Utopia, and have ministers and subjects to your mind. The poor shall be the rich, and the rich the poor. There shall be no unlovely perfection ; and, as the first approach to this consummation, all the men shall be exterminated."

"Certainly, all hopeless, heartless, and satirical men," cried Louisa, with an arch smile, as she put an end to the discourse, by seating herself at the piano.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOUISA still persevered in her weekly singing lesson with Helen Bolton. With many, long before this, it would have been discontinued; but Louisa's hope or perseverance had hitherto prevailed. These Tuesday meetings had served to begin, and keep up, a constant intercourse with the Boltons. Louisa had always wished these lessons to take place at her own house, but the Boltons overruled her desire, and Louisa agreed it should be according to their plan, till a certain note in her own new piano, which was the avowed cause of Helen's reluctance to take her lesson at Branstone, should be reduced to order.

Louisa was always exact to her appointment, but the Boltons were not as observant of theirs. Sometimes Helen was out, and was expected home in a few minutes; and after waiting a long time, Louisa was obliged to leave. Sometimes the room was full of callers, for it seemed never to strike any body to admit visitors into another room. Sometimes Helen would be in such a lively chattering frame, that no entreaties could retain her by the side of her teacher, much more induce her to form her voice to a musical sound. Thus, lesson after lesson was lost, and very little progress gained, though Louisa generally consented, on the urgent entreaties of the party, to supply the lost lesson some other day. It was on one of

these appointed Tuesdays, that the following scene took place.

Louisa had been in the room about a quarter of an hour; she had an engagement to walk with her husband, and was rather desirous of losing no time. The incessant and causeless obstacles that prevented the business upon which Louisa had come, were sufficient to try, and sufficient to move, any but a temper as sweet as Louisa's: probably Louisa herself would not have borne the trial with equal equanimity, at an earlier period of her career. Helen, at length, seemed tamed, and was submitting to being led by her unwearied preceptress to her station by the piano, when she caught sight of some figures, passing the low fence in front of the drawing-room windows. "Oh!" cried she, clapping her hands, "there they are, I believe! Oh, that abominable wall! how I detest it! I hate it more and more every day. Mamma, I wish you would pull it down at once. Louisa, don't you hate walls round a house? Oh, yes, I remember, I know you do! I have heard you quarrelled with an old dowager somewhere for saying you did. Well, I am sure it was a very honourable cause of warfare: what is more tantalizing than to be, as now, cut off from the sight of one's company; I never know whether to stay or to go, for except one happens to be looking, what with the shrubs, and what with new bonnets and dresses, it is ten to one, if one catches glimpse enough to be of any use, of one's visitors. I am sure I can only guess, now, that it is the Framptons."

"Well, it was," said Emma, "for I saw the toss of Esther's head."

"What makes you so eager about the Framptons, to-

day?" asked Margaret; "generally, you set up for indifference when Frederick is of the party."

"But now comes my triumph," cried Helen; "I was determined he should come in just now, and I have managed it!" So saying, she flew out of the room, to secure her object.

"Oh, Louisa!" cried Eliza, "I am so glad! you will, at last, see Mr. Frederick Frampton we have talked so often of. Now you will see what a fine young man he is; isn't he, Margaret?"

"Yes; a very fine handsome young man, certainly; and what is more, with very elegant manners," replied her sister.

"Oh, yes, very elegant manners," continued Eliza, "and so clever and witty; I am sure I am afraid to speak before him, he takes one up so; but Helen doesn't care for him a bit; I'm sure you'll admire him prodigiously, Louisa. Won't she, Margaret?"

"People differ so as to beauty," said Margaret, "but at any rate you will think him highly educated and witty; he is so well read; he is quite a black swan in our parts, where, you know, we seldom meet with any thing like intellect or cultivation."

"He is quite the gentleman, certainly," said Mrs. Bolton; "I only wish Laurry could catch a little of his politeness and fashionable air."

"He has been so much among people of rank," observed Eliza, with some awe, and in tones rather lower than usual, since Helen's voice, and approaching laughter, warned them of the vicinity of the subject of their remarks.

At the same moment, Helen threw the door wide open,

and the party entered. Mr. Frampton started back at the sight of a stranger, well aware who it was. Helen burst out laughing, while Esther pulled her back, with reproachful exclamations. At the same time, Margaret was reciting, audibly to Louisa, the line:—

“See, the conquering hero comes.”

Mr. Frampton drew himself up, with an air of dignity, and awaited in silence a cessation of the merriment.

“I was determined you should meet,” cried Helen, still laughing; then stepping forwards, in an off-hand flourishing manner, she introduced Mrs. Davenport to Mr. Frederick Frampton. Louisa was quite unconscious of the meaning of what was passing; indeed, she did not seek for any especial meaning; but considered it a part of the manners of her new friends, and she began to think she had never seen these manners exhibited in a less attractive form; she was even going farther, and was on the point of considering the propriety of viewing the present scene as an illustration of a remark of her husband’s, on a former occasion, upon intimacy and familiarity.

“Now, Louisa,” continued Helen, “behold, gaze, and ruminate! do you remember ever having seen this gentleman before?”

Louisa replied simply in the negative, adding an enquiry of Mr. Frampton, as to when or where they had met.

“Look!” pursued Helen, “the like is not often seen; once viewed, never to be forgotten.”

“I fear I must plead guilty as to memory,” said Louisa, “but I might remember circumstances, if Mr. Frampton would be so kind as to help me.”

Mr. Frampton, however, showed himself proof, practi-

cally, to sweet tones and looks, as in theory he professed to be ; he still looked a dignified silence.

Helen proceeded ; " Help you, Louisa ! fie, for shame ! what ! want help to remember a thing like this ! you might as well ask help to remember a sun that should shine forth at midnight ; fie, for shame ! what shall we do with her, Mr. Fred ? "

The gentleman turned on his heel, and in a highly piqued tone, exclaimed, for all who chose to hear, " I can only say, I am very sorry for Mrs. Davenport. "

Had Louisa been Miss Robinson, perhaps she would have thought herself called upon for nothing but tacit amusement ; but being, as she was, Mrs. Davenport, there seemed a degree of politeness incumbent on her, from which, in the other case, she might have felt absolved. This, perhaps, was one of the instances of which she so often deplored the annoyance, in her character as a married woman.

Esther interposed, saying to Louisa, " Fred has such acute feelings ! he is so soon wounded ; but I am sure you are too polite to hurt him purposely ; he is not used to be slighted and forgotten. You know he is so sought after and admired in our neighbourhood, and, indeed, wherever he goes ! Do not be distressed, " continued she, considerably, " he will come to presently. Fred is not unforgiving, he is only hasty, and very sensitive. "

So saying, Miss Frampton stepped across to her brother, and following him as he was pacing about as freely as the circumscribed space of a bay window would allow, she arrested his movements by seizing his arm, and whispered something into his ear which seemed to be endued with a consolatory power ; for in a short space, the irritation sub-

sided, and with a pacified air, he advanced towards the group in the middle of the room.

Louisa was meanwhile applying to Margaret, as the steadiest of the party, for an explanation of the scene; and finding Margaret threw no light on this extraordinary manifestation of feeling, she busied herself in recalling all the strangers whom, by name known or unknown, she had seen or spoken to at Brinksworth and its neighbourhood. While thus engaged, she turned her eyes upon the angered gentleman, and, smiling to herself, she thought, "why he is as absurd as the hero of the red coat at the Hunt Ball at Ashley, and has much the same air; all absurd people are alike." But the next remembrance was, that Ashley was the metropolis of Brinksworth; and the thought flashed across her mind, could the individuals not only be alike, but the same? The more she thought it, the more probable it seemed; yet she doubted, whether to allude to the circumstance: if her idea were correct, it might be taken as no compliment, and if not, it might be an additional offence. She, therefore, waited to see the turn matters would take, and rejoiced in her wisdom, when Mr. Frampton, with a polite air and action, stepped forward and said, "I have a thousand apologies to make you, Mrs. Davenport, for an error I have fallen into. I have never had the happiness of meeting you before, but have mistaken you, as Miss Robinson, for another young lady, who was staying at Brinksworth about the same time."

Louisa could not now repeat her protest of ignorance of the individual; the more he spoke, the more she fancied she had heard and seen him before; the situation of the parties seemed reversed, but she feared being explicit, lest

she should raise another storm. She smiled her forgiveness, and simply replied, "And now, I could say I fancied I *had* seen you once before."

"Oh, very likely," returned Mr. Frampton, carelessly; "more than once, I should anticipate. I am one of those Will of the Wisps that are here, there, and every where."

"One of those gentry with cap and bells in a neighbourhood," continued Helen, "whom, not to know, argues yourself unknown."

"The lady Firefly cannot long keep silence," observed Mr. Frampton; "flames must burst, or find a vent, or she would perish self-consumed."

"Pray, good folks," said Helen, "compliment Mr. Frederick Frampton, on the knowledge he displays of entomology;—the nature of fire-flies and glow-worms, in particular."

"I leave the worms to Miss Helen," cried Mr. Frampton: "I think I have proved myself better instructed in the nature of flies—*water*-flies, at any rate,—whatever may be thought about *fire*-flies. Ha, ha! Mrs. Davenport, this alludes to a circumstance you may have *heard* of, though it happened before you came among us;" and Mr. Frampton laughed heartily at his wit and his triumph.

"A truce to all this nonsense," cried Esther; "you would not trifle in this way, if you knew the news I came to bring."

"News!" exclaimed Helen, glancing at Mr. Frampton, "I thought you came at my bidding."

"No gentleman can resist a fair lady's bidding, and no lady, spreading bridal news," observed Mr. Frampton;

and perceiving the sensation his intimation had made, continued, "Yes, ladies, bridal news, news of a marriage among your friends. What lady does not love to tell and to hear such good luck? I heartily wish the same to you—every one of you young ladies, before this day year! ha! ha! Mrs. Davenport is out of the pale of my good wishes; she is well provided for; took care of herself before I had the happiness or the opportunity of offering them to her. Too bad!—very unfair! for such young ladies to help themselves before their elders!—very unpollite, ha! ha!"

Louisa perceived that there was no chance of her singing lesson, and felt a sudden conviction spring up that the moment of her appointment with her husband had arrived. Her attempt at taking leave passed however without notice in the excitement around, and on looking at her watch and perceiving she had half an hour to spare, she resolved to put aside impatient feelings and remain a quiet spectator of the scene before her.

Helen meanwhile was rallying Mr. Frampton on his assertion that ladies took such especial delight in bridal news, when himself had now been the first to report this.

"Yes, Fred," cried his sister, "it is too bad! you took the words out of my mouth. Now, get you gone," added she, thrusting her brother, in play, out of the circle, "and do not interfere with us ladies."

Mr. Frampton, as a sign of obedience, threw his handkerchief as a veil over his face, and stood where he had been placed.

Esther continued, "Well, it's Lizzy, cousin Lizzy, going to be married. Now, are not you all surprised?"

"Lizzy! indeed!" cried Emma, "well, I *am* sur-

prised,—very much surprised. I thought she would never marry."

"Nonsense and stuff, Emma!" cried Margaret, "and pray, why not? A silly girl, poring all day over poetry and novels, is just the person to marry the first man that comes."

"Oh, you know, Lizzy made such a fuss about that affair with young Knowles," said Helen, "that Emma now chooses to be surprised that Lizzy does not wear the willow!"

"Why, it was nothing in the world but a common flirtation," observed Eliza.

"To be sure," added Margaret, "and I dare say Lizzy has had a dozen since. Sentimental young ladies always do."

"I am sure *unsentimental* young ladies always do!" exclaimed Emma, quickly.

"Well, then, all do," said Helen, "and that settles the matter very shortly. I am sure I don't see why ladies are to wear the willow for any man;—men are none so good, any of them."

"I protest and declare," cried Mr. Frampton, with a vehement action withdrawing his veil, "I protest and declare that if I knew of any lady who would wear the willow for me, I would marry her this moment."

"That is something like putting salt on the bird's tail, Mr. Fred," observed Helen.

"I would fall desperately in love with her this very instant," continued Mr. Frampton; "I would follow her to the world's end. Be she black or white, fair or foul, rich or poor, I am hers. I kneel for her favour;" and he suited his action to his word, kneeling with a devoted wave

of the hand, which seemed to offer his allegiance to any lady on earth, present or absent ; though a cool observer might have fancied his devotion was not entirely general.

"Nonsense, Mr. Fred !" cried Helen, "you spoil all with your rhodomontade. Now, Esther, pray go on about Lizzy."

"We laughed at her so much before," said Esther, "that she became very close. Besides, you know, one letter was lost,—the second she wrote. But you may remember in her first, written very hastily a few weeks after she left, she spoke of a very delightful young man."

"Yes, she called him Alphonso," said Eliza, "but that was not his real name."

"Well, I always thought something would come of that," observed Margaret.

"But he was engaged !" exclaimed Emma.

"Well, I suppose his engagement has gone off," observed Helen.

"You have guessed all exactly !" cried Esther, "and you may fancy poor Lizzy's raptures. Is it not fortunate ? Quite a romantic history ! And now, shall I read you Lizzy's account ?"

The offer was received with joy, and after Esther's warmly assuring her auditors that they would find it most interesting, she read as follows :—

My dear Esther,

Perhaps you will have heard from home, the bare fact, that I am going to be married ; but I mean to tell you all the vicissitudes of the affair, and therefore I write a separate letter for you and those I love. Yes, indeed ! I have at last found the man of my heart ! but oh ! what have I not gone through, before I could call him

mine! You may remember my mentioning Alphonso, (I did not dare give his real name;) well, it was this Alphonso on whom my fate hung, from the first moment of our meeting. Guess, then, what were my feelings when I found he was engaged! I discovered this fatal fact by chance,—he never told me so; but it accounted to me for many pieces of manner and conduct, which, else, were unaccountable; for it was soon very plain to me, that I was all the world to him: he was always at my side,—always telling me of my likeness to a dear friend of his. I guessed who this friend was; and what is a greater sign of a change of affection, than to be likened to the object of a man's love? This thought made me very wretched, for I thought what a faithless lover he must be, whom I had believed the image of perfection! every body perceived his devotion to me, which was, indeed, evident and open, for he is the most frank and generous of his sex. At length, we had arrived at our destination, and he and I must part. We did part; and imagine my distress! I heard nothing of him for two months; when, one day, he was shown into the room. His business happened to settle him near us for a time, and he made my brother's house his home: he was here always, and his attentions were too pointed not to be seen. My brother, at length, spoke to him, and now came out the whole miserable history;—he was engaged, as I had fancied. Robert was very angry, and high words ensued. I was near; and wrought up into an irresistible impulse, I rushed in, and threw myself between my brother and my lover. By this means I prevented fatal consequences, and my secret being discovered by my agitation, he confided to me, that feeling the weight of the chain that bound him to one so

far distant, he had written to obtain a release. I plainly saw he loved me, and me alone. But we had to wait ! imagine the torture of suspense that tore our hearts during this interval. At length, the letter arrived ; and now fancy the re-action of our feelings,—our joy,—our ecstasy. She not only freely gave him up for the space he had mentioned, but gave him up freely *for ever*. “ Be not alarmed,” said she—(I forget the very words)—“ be not alarmed ; I release you for ever. No considerations shall ever induce me to think of you but as of one whose love is given to another !” This was just what I wanted,—so distinct there could be no mistake, and so cold there could be no regret. Oh, what a heart she must have, to give up such a man as he without a struggle ! But this relieved me of any scruples, and I accepted him without a drawback. By the time you receive this, I shall be a bride ; so drink my health, and think of me as your happy friend under a new name.

“ I dare say she will not be married after all,” said Helen, as Esther paused.

“ Well, I hope she will—poor little Liz,” continued Eliza ; “ she deserves it, after so many troubles.”

“ Deserves it, Eliza !” cried Emma, “ I think he seems no such great catch. I would not have a man with half a heart.”

“ Oh, but he had a heart and a half, at least, after his first love had restored him his,” cried Helen, laughing ; “ all was right again then.”

“ I agree with Miss Emma,” said Mr. Frampton ; “ I despise a man who can jilt a poor girl. He must be an unworthy dog.”

"It is very wrong, in my opinion," said Mrs. Bolton, "for young people to enter into long engagements."

"Yes, to be sure," said Helen; "why did they not marry at once? She must have been silly, to expect him to be constant to her for so long, and without meeting too. She must have set herself at a high price."

"She valued his constancy and worth at a far higher price than they deserved," said Louisa, at length; "I wonder you can any of you say a word for such a man."

"Well, it is true he was a very faithless lover," said Margaret; "but I hope he will make a better husband; a man does not make the worse husband, you know, for being a bit of a flirt!"

"How can you say so!" exclaimed Louisa, indignantly.

"Because I see it is the case," returned Margaret, laughing; "I see young men flirt, coquet, and jilt; yet, after all, they turn into very good husbands, when once they are married."

"They may make easy kind husbands," said Louisa, "but I never can believe they turn into good men, without the same sort of change, that it takes to make a hardened thief an honest man; and that is a change that very rarely happens."

"No, no," said Helen, "that is very different; theft is a crime, and deserves hanging; we do not hang a man for changing his mind."

"But some men *are* hung for changing their mind," replied Louisa, "and all the world agrees in the justice of their sentence."

"When may that be?" asked Helen.

"Traitors only change their minds," returned Louisa.

"Ha, ha! well done Mrs. Davenport!" cried Mr. Framp-

ton ; "that does you credit ; disloyalty to a lady deserves hanging ! and so it does. My lady Firefly thinks so no less, only she chooses to speak in defiance of her humble servant."

"I hope my words and my feelings are my own, independent of any servant, however humble," said Helen.

"Well, my dear," observed Mrs. Bolton to Louisa, "you are always right and clear-sighted, but it does not do to be too severe upon one's friends ; at that rate, we shall condemn the whole world ; for poor Lizzy's sake, you must not be over rigid."

"If this young lady is content to be satisfied with such a man," replied Louisa, "I cannot well wrong her."

"Oh, I do not think poor little Lizzy has behaved ill in any way ! what could she do ?" said Eliza ; "she never told him she liked him, and she waited quite patiently till the answer came ; besides, it seems he wrote before she knew any thing about it."

"From her own account," returned Louisa, "it seems to me that they both acted without either feeling or principle ; and what has been betrayed here, you may be sure, will be farther developed in their future life."

"My dear," said Mrs. Bolton, smiling, "you are a sweet youthful enthusiast. I always love your warmth ; but, alas ! we cannot go through the world with these fresh feelings ! Experience and years make more ravage on the heart than the person."

"No, indeed !" cried Louisa, warmly, "indeed I cannot give up my point, though these are friends of yours ; I see plainly, they have both been behaving in an unprincipled ungenerous manner, and the only happy person in the affair, is the lady who has been so slighted and forgot-

ten. *We* ought not to forget her,—her claims and her feelings.”

“Oh, certainly not; *I* do not forget her,” said Margaret; “*I* am very sorry for her,—at least, *I* should have been if she had been my friend; but *I* dare say *she* has forgotten it all by this time, and perhaps is married herself.”

“Supposing that possible,” replied Louisa, “*I* do not see that it alters the question.”

“Certainly not,” said Mr. Frampton; “you would not have a lady wear the willow for a fellow like that. No, no, that would be too bad. However the long and the short of the matter, is something more than romance, according to the elder lady’s view of the affair. My aunt’s account is, that the gentleman could not afford to marry his first love, and could his second; so it does not require a conjuror to tell the tale.”

“What can you mean, Fred?” cried his sister; “Lizzy, with a tribe of brothers and sisters at home, and no money among them, was no prize.”

“Very true,” said her brother, laughing, “Lizzy was no prize in England; but Lizzy’s temper, alone with a brother in India, was a fortune. I fancy Bob would be heartily glad to be quit of his sister before the end of the voyage; and Bob, I anticipate, is Na-Bob enough to have many pretty bits of promotion for his pets; and this young fellow having got himself into a scrape, had the alternative of becoming one of these pets, or standing his chance with a bullet.”

“Stuff!” cried Margaret, “as if Bob Long would fight a duel! India does not work such changes as that.”

“Not he!” said Mr. Frampton, “but the threat looked

well, and was creditable to both parties, and it was the thing to act upon it as real."

Louisa meanwhile was exclaiming, "India! I did not know all this took place in India!—Alfred Jenappe of course!" "And this is the end," thought she—for no one attended to her first exclamation of surprise,—“this is the end of poor dear Alice's love! Oh, to hear her and her feelings canvassed in such a way, by such people!"

Tears of indignation sprung into her eyes, while every additional word seemed a fresh wound. Meanwhile she stood a passive listener, as the rest, in their usual merry strain, continued their remarks.

"She was evidently cold and indifferent," observed Helen; "it is plain she did not understand 'how to manage him;' if she had humoured him a little, and given him his head, he would have soon come round again. At least she might have tried what management would do."

"It was wrong, of course," said Margaret, "for him to break his faith; but after all it is nonsense to expect people to live upon nothing."

"Why, if he had waited his five years, and returned," added Esther, "there would have been nothing but his salary for them, and that would have been poor enough."

"A man must look to the main chance sooner or later," said Mr. Frampton, "and the sooner he does it the better. It seems to me that this fellow is but a loose sort of hand, and has been looking one way and rowing another."

"How do you know that?" said Helen; "how do you know that he was not mistaken in the first lady's expectations?"

"Well, that makes the better for his sense, and the worse for his heart," replied Mr. Frampton; "I leave

you ladies to settle that. For my part, I set love at a very high value, but my notions are too romantic for the world in general."

"Highly romantic!" exclaimed Helen; "*the sooner we look to the main chance the better!* Nothing can be more noble in sentiment or expression."

"I spoke of this Jenappe," said Mr. Frampton, carelessly, "a good-for-nothing worthless dog!"

"You may talk for ever," said Margaret, "but the fact will remain the same. Romance and prudence are as opposite as the two poles, and can never be united. People must make their choice, and marry more or less for either love or money. If they marry for love, they must get money afterwards; and if they marry for money, they must try as hard as they can to scrape up all the love they can afterwards. So that the result, as far as the world sees, is equality."

"Oh, yes," cried Helen, "all is the same in the end. In a couple of years, love is always gone; so those are best off who have something substantial, like money, to stay behind."

"I cannot agree with a word you have all been saying for the last quarter of an hour," said Louisa, at length; "I fully believe that the two qualities you would disjoin, *can* as well be united, as they *ought* to be in every case."

"What! prudence and love!" cried Helen, laughing ironically; "this is a new doctrine."

"Quite impossible," added Emma; "when prudence looks in, love flies out at the window. Every poet will tell you that."

"Every poet is not always right," said Louisa.

"Then every philosopher will," continued Margaret.

"And every-day experience," added Helen.

"We must take care to adapt our words and select our examples justly," observed Louisa; "I do not call a miser prudent, nor a spendthrift liberal."

"Well, I could give you a hundred examples that would satisfy you," said Helen: "there is my brother Stephen and his wife,—theirs was a regular mad love match; and I should like to know what prudence there has been in that from beginning to end. Then, Elizabeth's was a sensible prudent affair, and what love was there there?—not one grain. She was tired of home, and satisfied with what he could offer; and he was glad of another wife to look after his children and maids."

"And of the two, I think Elizabeth's the happiest match," observed Margaret.

"I cannot speak of those I do not know," said Louisa, "but I think we may all agree upon one match, and might canvass that, as uniting the two contrary qualities—Mr. and Mrs. Grove."

There was a little pause. Louisa felt satisfied that her instance was unexceptionable.

"It certainly was a love match," said Mrs. Bolton.

"But I do not call it prudent," said Helen; "the family looked cold on it, and have always been helping them, we know. Though Mrs. Grove is prudent now for her family, she was but like the rest of the world in her youth."

"Sometimes, Helen, you say that the Groves are, and always have been, rich," observed Emma; "rich enough to take care of themselves if they pleased. If so, how was the match imprudent?"

"I am amused at Emma setting up for prudence," said

Helen, laughing ; " Emma, who thinks all matches but Gretna Green ones mere common-places !"

" I think, however, you cannot reject my example," pursued Louisa ; " I have given you an instance of a prudent love match."

" Oh, nobody doubts Mrs. Grove's prudence now," said Helen, laughing, " and I am not old enough to vouch for or against it in her youth. I only know I think her monstrous disagreeable, and wonder how there could have been any love on one side of the question, at any rate. I suppose they divided the qualities—she had all the prudence, and he had all the love."

" Mrs. Davenport preaches more by example than precept," observed Mr. Frampton, with a somewhat satirical tone ; " no one can question the *prudence* of her choice."

" There, Louisa ! that is what you deserve !" cried Helen, with a laugh, which was echoed by her two sisters and Mr. Frampton.

" I think we have you there, Mrs. Davenport !" said he.

" Yes," continued Helen, " Louisa, you must range yourself on Elizabeth's side of the examples."

Louisa meanwhile, with mantling colour, was burning with displeasure and indignation. " This," thought she, " is indeed the familiarity without intimacy, the frankness without truth, that Henry predicted ! Oh, that I should ever be in a company to hear him thus treated !—thus alluded to ! I neither can nor will say a word. Defend my choice !—explain ! No, never, before such an audience ! Yet who is to blame but myself ? The shame I now feel is a part of myself,—a part of my own nature and character ; when shall I get free of it ?"—And here her thoughts turned to Alice and the many maxims

of wisdom that from time to time had fallen from her, suited to the present occasion.

The party meanwhile perceiving Louisa's silence and embarrassment, were more disposed to enjoy it, than to account for it; and none less than Mr. Frampton, who was inclined to prolong the scene, till his sister, always the peacemaker of the party, observed with kindly intentions, "But it does not follow that because Mr. Davenport was rich, that Mrs. Davenport did not love him. That would be very unfair;—else a rich man can never be loved."

This raised another laugh.

"Well, done, Essie! ha, ha!" exclaimed Mr. Frampton, "but, with your leave, we will leave rich men to take their chance for that."

While Louisa continued firm to her resolution of silence, she could not but call to mind her own former sentiments, once even expressed to Alice, on the same subject. She could not deny that in word they sounded very like those now propounded, but in actual meaning she found a difference.

During this space, Louisa had overcome the first excitement of her feeling, and in the first pause that occurred she reverted to a past subject. With a very quiet air, she spoke of the Indian news they had just been discussing, and added that she was acquainted with some of the parties.

There was a little—a very little—change in Louisa's manner and tone;—that sort of change which is felt, rather than seen, and felt in proportion to a consciousness of a cause for it. Most of the party knew they had been rude, though, had the scene been talked over, perhaps each would have differed as to the actual point of offence, and

all would have pronounced the fault on the side where offence was taken ; that given being scarcely recognized. The feeling, however, as far as it went, in the present instance caused a damp, till Helen cried, " How strange, and how fortunate that you should know this Mr. Jenappe ! Louisa, do tell us what he is like !"

" Oh, pray do !" cried the rest, pressing round ; and Eliza added, " I do so long to know what Lizzy's husband is like !"

" I should think you may guess that, from his conduct," observed Louisa, in an ambiguous tone, which was calculated to do her cause better service than any manifestation of zeal or displeasure.

It had the effect of producing a pause. Louisa took advantage of it to turn to Mrs. Bolton, in order to take leave, saying Mr. Davenport must be waiting for her by this time.

It was the first time that Louisa had so designated her husband to the Boltons, since their early intimacy ; perhaps, at the moment her words passed her lips, she was not aware of the change ; her feelings were in a transition state, from friendship to something lower ; how much lower, she could not tell, and they took this form of reducing themselves to words.

" Oh, my dear, must you go ?" said Mrs. Bolton, kindly ; " I am afraid my girls have vexed you, by talking too freely. If they had known you had a friend interested in the affair, they would have looked upon it quite differently."

The young ladies warmly assured Louisa of their concurrence in their mother's assertion, and Margaret, as she held out her hand, said, " Come, Louisa, we must forget

and forgive; we can never keep our friends, if we visit severely such accidents as these. We must each feel for our own friends, and make the best we can of their peccadilloes; we must forget and forgive."

Louisa was never so much embarrassed in her life; she felt there was truth and sense in Margaret's view, and her warm and frank nature was such as to be much touched by the treatment she now met. She knew she was right in her judgment, and that they had been wrong in theirs. She was displeased,—not offended,—but was too confused in mind to make this distinction; and all she could comprehend at the moment was, that she had felt severely towards those who were now feeling and acting kindly towards her. "Oh, you mistake!" cried she, hurriedly, in reply; "you mistake! I have nothing to forgive,—nothing at all, indeed."

"Oh, yes, but you have," continued Margaret; "you have to forgive our thinking more of our friend than yours."

"No, indeed," said Louisa, glad to explain; "that was not the point; I confess I was sorry that you should excuse,—nay, justify,—a man so wanting in all good principle."

"Ah, my dear, you had the advantage of us," said Mrs. Bolton; "you knew so much more about him."

"Indeed, I judged only from Miss Frampton's letter," replied Louisa, earnestly; "I did not know it was Alfred Jenappe till—till—" Louisa knew not how to denote the term of her displeasure, and ended, "Till the discussion was nearly ended."

"Well, if you have nothing to forgive, you have some-

thing to forget: you must forget, my dear," returned Mrs. Bolton, smiling.

This was more than Louisa could promise; she was startled at the idea of promising it; certainly, it had never entered her head to forget what had been passing. It seemed too much as a fulfilment of her husband's predictions, and of many disputed maxims of Alice's, not to be registered among the number of her own faults and mistakes. Would it not be wrong, even to try and forget? If she forgot, and went on as before, must she not either smother her sense of right and wrong, and become like those she now so highly disapproved, or be constantly subject to dilemmas such as the present? Yet, after all her profession and affection,—unsought, as it had been,—was she justified to withdraw, on what was, perhaps, after all, a very excusable error, on the side of kindness? Then, the other view of the case came before her, supported as it was, by previous manifestations of want of sound principle and pure feelings, and she seemed tongue-tied.

Meanwhile, her friends continued to urge her, and their anxious faces and softened manners added to her distress and perplexity. Mrs. Bolton's words touched her the most. "You do not mean to say, my dear," cried this lady affectionately, taking Louisa's hand, "that for this little forgetfulness,—this unfortunate little ignorance,—we shall lose your love and friendship! Oh, no, my sweet Louisa, I will not believe it for a moment; you are not so hard-hearted,—so barbarous—to those who, however unworthy of you, love you, with the love of a mother and sisters." And Mrs. Bolton fervently kissed the hand she held.

Poor Louisa was quite overcome; gladly would she

have burst into tears, but all along, the presence of Mr. Frampton and his sister, especially the former, had restrained her both from the expression and indulgence of her feelings. The gentleman stood apart, in a somewhat independent attitude, gazing on the scene, with some symptoms of surveying it critically. Louisa wished he had withdrawn, or that her friends had delayed their solicitations till they were alone, and the sense of this had kept her cool, and outwardly unmoved.

It is unfortunate for a cause, when people mis-time matters of this nature. Surely none but the parties immediately concerned, should be present at such a scene.

Louisa could have freed herself from her embarrassment in a moment, by rallying her playfulness, but she felt this would not have been sincere, and would have misrepresented her feelings, and perhaps her intentions, so, after Mrs. Bolton's affectionate action, she said, "You are always kind—very kind—I never can forget that, and never wish to do so." So saying, she slipped away from the group, and succeeded in making her final farewells. Mr. Frampton stepped forward, offering his escort, but Louisa explained she was going but a few doors, to enquire after nurse Kettlethwaite.

CHAPTER XV.

NURSE Kettlethwaite had had one of her attacks, which, though called rheumatism, seemed always so much to partake the nature of paralysis, that her kind friends, were anxious and watchful at such times. This morning one of Mr. Davenport's men had been despatched for the doctor. William, the messenger who had gone, was the letter carrier for the whole village, as Mr. Davenport sent into Foremouth every day for the Chadleigh bag as well as his own. It so happened that nobody was able to go in William's stead, so this day the letters were late. This circumstance, with some readers, may account for the philosophy with which Mr. Davenport bore his wife's being a full quarter of an hour beyond her appointment. Few men, when themselves punctual, whether from accident or habit, take coolly being kept even five minutes by their wives, except indeed their wives are of the order of irreclaimable procrastinators. Louisa was by no means one of these, and therefore was, with hasty steps, recovering lost time, and lamenting the disappointment she had caused her husband, when she perceived him waiting for her at the appointed stile, neither looking at his watch, nor exhibiting signs of impatience or gloom: no, not even when he first caught sight of her. "What a good patient creature he is," thought she, "always the same—always

that happy placid smile ! I am sure I never could have guessed that an old bachelor of thirty-six years' standing, could have fallen into such amiable ways." But these thoughts were but for a moment, for Louisa was full of all that had passed. She longed to tell all ; but doubted how he would receive the part that related to her own particular concerns. Perhaps he would say, as he had done before, " Louisa, I do not interfere with your acquaintances." She hoped not, for she longed to make confession, and desired his advice. But she need not think of that just now : she had first to tell the news that related to Alice, or rather to Alice's feelings ; for any influence that news from India could have upon Alice beyond this, was, she knew, long passed.

Mr. Davenport was not half as much surprised as Louisa had expected him to be ; nay, he went farther, and said he thought that Alice would not be more surprised than himself. " Alice," said he, " looks so much to the principle, or the want of principle, that persons exhibit in critical eras of their lives, that if once a laxity has been betrayed before her, she scarcely is surprised when it shows itself in a more disgraceful form."

" I know she is very clear-headed and strong-minded," said Louisa, " but I think she is not prepared for this. It seems a deliberate piece of deception from first to last. Alfred Jenappe must have had this Lizzy in his head all along, and that makes his conduct more mean than ever."

" It is clear that he wished to be free in case an emergency of this kind should arise," replied Mr. Davenport ; " the cool contemplation of such a possibility proved him ready to avail himself of the first eligible opportunity, to the disregard of all former feelings and ties : it seems,

then, quite a secondary point as to the very moment when the thought of another first came into his mind. Possibly he could not tell whether Miss Lizzy influenced him at all at the time he wrote his letter. Thus it is that men make their own fate: he had been preparing himself for his, till the moment of the brother's challenge, when he could easily persuade himself there was no means of escape."

"Yes, I see clearly he could make every thing turn his way," continued Louisa; "friendship for the brother, gratitude to the sister, honour to both, and last, not least, though felt in silence, interest and self-preservation!"

"It is hard to see certainly, what object there could be, to demand the risk of his life," observed Mr. Davenport, smiling.

"I do think," cried Louisa, with a sudden burst of indignation, "men get worse and worse every day! Selfish, heartless, self-deceivers, as they are! I wonder, Henry, you are not ashamed of being a man! they are monsters, in human form!"

"If I made friends of your monsters, or defended their conduct," replied Mr. Davenport, "your indignation might be well placed, though if such were the case, I suppose it would avail little towards reformation. But, Louisa, do you ever think it necessary to take the acts of women in the same personal manner?"

Louisa's conscience applied her husband's words in a way he did not intend; her thoughts flew to the actors of the scene she had just witnessed. "As you say, Henry," replied she, "perhaps I should, if I could not keep quite free and clear of people of such sentiments; but how can we do this? At least, Henry, how can I, who have forced myself into difficulties, almost with my eyes open? It

seems but a small thing, yet your words just now, on people making their own fate, reminded me of my own precipitation. Certainly, I have courted difficulties, which now I fear I cannot escape."

"Something uncomfortable has happened between you and the Boltons, I suppose," said Mr. Davenport, enquiringly; "on this very business perhaps?"

Louisa answered in the affirmative, and added, that they had nearly parted coolly.

"Only Mrs. Bolton got up a scene, I suppose," continued Mr. Davenport, drily; "she is a good hand at that!"

"Oh, Henry!" Louisa was beginning, in a deprecatory tone, when remembering her present position, and her late mistakes, she subdued herself to silence.

During this conversation, they had been lingering at the stile, which led across the fields to Stockfield, their intended destination, and as there were still no signs of William and the post-bag, Mr. Davenport proposed giving up their first plan, and taking their walk on the road, in order to meet their letters.

Louisa agreed; after observing, she disliked giving up plans already formed, especially as she had mentioned to the Boltons, that they were going to make calls at Stockfield.

"What does that signify?" said Mr. Davenport; "the post is more important than our calls, and we break no engagement."

"But I call letters a treat, and it has always been my way to defer such things as long as I can,—I always did so at school," said Louisa.

"Then count this holiday-time," said her husband, "and learn to let things take their chance, be they pain or treat, sour or sweet."

"But I am always afraid that is an easy selfish way of going on," objected Louisa; "I seem to have no guide for daily conduct if I am not strict in my rules. I like to make plans, and abide by them."

"It is all very well," observed Mr. Davenport, "if no superior claim interfere, and if you vex or inconvenience nobody but yourself; but any woman forming herself by your rule would make a highly uncomfortable wife."

"Ah," cried Louisa, "that is the worst of being married!—to keep a man contented and quiet, one must be so very comfortable oneself."

"Certainly a woman must give up her own will, as you are doing now, if she would make a decent sort of wife, instead of an eternal fidget," observed Mr. Davenport.

"That," cried Louisa, laughing, "is a honeyed pill for me; but I really will swallow it, Henry, and try not to be over strict. I know I was hated for it at school; but I never thought it a fault."

"It is perhaps a noble fault in youth, but a paltry one in age," said Mr. Davenport.

"Another pill for me, a little bit gilded this time," said Louisa; "but though I like both wisdom and compliments in moderation, I do really wish to talk to you about the Boltons, or rather Mrs. Bolton, for I am very uneasy at what has passed."

"They have offended you?" asked Mr. Davenport.

"Scandalized me—disgusted me, Henry! Yet after all, I feel wrong in noticing it. It was bad, very bad,—each subject and each word worse than the last; but Mrs. Bolton is so sweet and affectionate, and though she certainly tolerates low views and principles, she does it rather to retain some hold over her wild family, than as really ap-

proving them. What shall I do, Henry? I can never feel at ease with the daughters again except they quite change, and yet I cannot withdraw with any comfort or propriety."

"A fine hubbub it will make!" cried Mr. Davenport.

"It is not generous of you to laugh at me, Henry," said his wife; "you know I feel that I have got myself into a scrape, and a scrape that I certainly could have avoided if I had been so minded."

"Well, so far, so well," said Mr. Davenport.

"I really am in earnest, Henry," said Louisa, and her husband could not doubt, for her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. "I know that, even without your warning, I ought not to have been taken suddenly with manners and modes so unlike what I really approve and admire. I know I was determined to like the Boltons, and to prove them good and excellent, because I really thought them vulgar; and my only excuse has been, that their mother is certainly different from the family."

"Then you think vulgarity a more serious objection to people than you did?" asked Mr. Davenport.

"If it affects the mind and principles, as it seems to do in this case,—certainly," replied Louisa. "I have seen it among the Boltons, the Framptons and their aunt, rather as selfishness than vulgarity. It considers itself—pleases itself—amuses itself—gratifies itself—without regard to any person present or absent, or any principle whatever. The nearest approach to kindness that it makes, is compelling people to be happy and satisfied its own way, and striving to force all feelings and judgments into its own low narrow current."

"And do you learn all this from your visit to-day?"

"No, not all," replied Louisa, "it has been long growing upon me ; but I still tried to believe, as at first, all was manner—mere superficial manner. But to-day all things were brought to a point. I saw Mr. Frampton, the young man they have made a hero of, and so much talked of as perfection ; and seeing him spoke volumes,—much more hearing him talk for half an hour. Besides his general and particular unloveliness, I cannot help suspecting that he told a direct falsehood to get out of some scrape ; and from what I have seen before, I am sorry to say, I do not think the Boltons would treat this as more than an innocent fib, to be laughed at behind my back. In the same way, I cannot feel sure of the daughters' professed affection and desire of making up this affair, because I have heard them so often talk over their quarrels with other friends, and treat these friends in so uncandid and indifferent a manner ; imputing all sorts of bad motives, though the quarrel was what they called made up. Do you think I am hard upon the Boltons, Henry ?"

"Did you think me hard upon want of taste, vulgarity, or whatever you choose to call it, in the abstract, Louisa ?" asked her husband.

"I certainly then thought that what is generally called vulgarity was mere manner—mere ignorance of conventional forms—almost simply a physical accident of station ; but I now see there is a substance in vulgarity of which I had no idea. It is active, not passive. It makes itself a body, and, like a wild animal, thrusts away and tramples down every thing that is lovely and gentle ; or, with the wisdom of a serpent, it turns these softer qualities into a pretence for excusing and tolerating any breach of principle and feeling, if the slightest personal consideration in-

terfere. I see plainly, as you said, Henry, that this sort of vulgarity is not Christian."

"And so you will find it in every class," said Mr. Davenport; "there may be conventional differences, according to the habits of the caste, but you may depend upon it that refinement, and even reserve, are as much a part of Christian charity, as forgiveness and kindness."

"Oh, not reserve!" cried Louisa; "I dislike reserve, under any form, it is so opposed to simplicity, and even to truth."

"Well, Louisa, if you can live at peace with your neighbours without it, do; certainly, you have begun, by giving it a trial."

They walked on a few steps, in silence. Louisa felt there was some force in her husband's remark. After it, how could she press the discussion she had at heart—namely, How she should act towards the Boltons? While she was revolving her various dilemmas in her mind, William and his horse appeared in sight, and the next moment her husband was engaged, unlocking the bag, and examining the letters it contained. "Here is one for you, from Clara," said he, "most likely to fix about her coming."

Louisa took the letter, and after announcing that Mrs. Bligh mentioned next week for her visit, she continued to read to herself. They had taken advantage of one of the wayside benches, which Mr. Davenport's philanthropy had set up, here and there, for the benefit of the weary or the idle, as a resting-place. It was a tempting seat, on a bank in the shade, and here they sat, each silently mastering the matter they held in their hands.

"How long, and how silent, you are, Henry!" cried his wife, after waiting a little; "I want to read you Clara's

letter. Are you sure there are no more for me?" continued she, turning the letters over.

"Not at all sure," said her husband, "on the contrary; here is one—from Alice."

"Oh, why did you not give it me at once?" cried Louisa, springing upon it; but her countenance changed for a moment, on perceiving a broad black border, as her husband held it up. "Oh, she has lost her grandmother!" cried she; "how sorry I am! What will poor Alice do?" and she hastily burst open the letter.

It contained the news she expected, with not much detail, as might be expected, since Mrs. Sidney had continued in the same doubtful state, and had not left her bed for months. Alice dwelt more on the softened and kind feelings her grandmother had latterly shewn; and mentioned circumstances that proved to Louisa how much Mrs. Sidney must have altered. After this, Alice spoke of her grandmother's disposition of her property, and continued:—"You will perhaps know more of things than I do, since I find that Mr. Davenport and Mr. Grove are written to, and have something to do with the will. It makes me very unhappy; for every body must suspect, what I do myself, that this unexpected application, in some way or other, concerns me. I can perceive my uncle Michael, who was summoned from London yesterday, is not at all pleased. He has had the will all along; I know nothing of any change, and have been as nervous as they could be, lest grandmamma should say a word to me; but she never did, except once, after we came to Brighton. I could smile at Phœbe's mode of defending me. She declares that Miss Sidney is clear, for that she watched day and night, and never saw her with so much as pen and

ink in her grandmamma's room. You will wonder what has come to me, to talk thus, at such a time; but I am forced to think of the subject, and could make myself seriously unhappy, as there seems every prospect of things turning out against me, and I can never prove my ignorance."

Mr. Davenport's letter, was a formal notice of his being appointed trustee, and a summons to him to attend the funeral, and be present at the opening of the will, according to a memorandum of Mrs. Sidney's.

This sudden news made a revolution in the direction of both the thoughts and movements of the Davenports. Mr. Davenport proposed turning, and calling at the Parsonage, to learn if Mr. Grove had received any letter, and hear his ideas on the subject.

Mr. Grove had very little to do, personally, with any of the Sidney family; but he had always kept up personal interviews, and, as an old family friend, had been occasionally applied to, in emergencies.

"I really do not know what to wish, on Alice's account," said Louisa; "the first moment, I thought what a dreary prospect she had before her—all alone in the world, as she is; and I hoped her grandmother had left her independent; but now, my old desire to see Alice make her way in the world, and be a lady, in spite of external circumstances, is revived by this awkward predicament she is placed in. What a nest of harpies to get among! Oh, Henry! after all, London vulgarity is worse than country vulgarity;—all money—they care for nothing on earth but money; and though they have so much among them, they are wretched at the idea of Alice having ever so small a pittance."

"Yet *you* almost grudge it poor Alice," said Mr. Davenport; "and so it is, I suppose, extremes meet. For myself, I confess I do not wish to see our self-devoted friend left destitute of all but her native grandeur of mind. It would be different if she had an immediate family to look to, or kind relations of any sort; but I know no one so desolate in the circumstances and events of her life, so far."

"And no one with such a temper and spirit to bear them," cried Louisa, warmly; "I perceive and appreciate her simplicity and buoyancy more every day. I never knew what they were when I was so near her; and yet, after all, I do not desire wealth for her; it sounds very selfish for me to say such a thing, but it is not. Oh, Henry, if you had heard said, what I have to-day, about wealth, I think you would wish all yours at the bottom of the sea!"

"All but just 'a pittance,' perhaps," observed Mr. Davenport, smiling; "and I know, for Alice's sake alone, you desire something beyond a pittance only for ourselves. Besides, consider young Laurry, who is looking to you for a college education! Do you wish to rob him of this, or to cut the Gordian knot at once, by cancelling the engagement?"

"Ah, Henry," said Louisa, "now you bring me back to realities; after all, they are the only grounds worth, or even capable of being speculated upon."

Thus the pair drew near the Parsonage, whither they were bending their steps, and we may as well prepare for their approach, by taking a peep within the walls of their peaceful habitation.

CHAPTER XVI.

"MY dear Horace," said Mrs. Grove, as she entered her husband's study with an open letter, "I *must* write to-day ; I hope you have changed your mind."

"No chance of that," replied Mr. Grove, looking up in his wife's face with good-humoured obstinacy, as he put aside his pen, "I am a man resolved."

"But Mademoiselle, at least," said Mrs. Grove, "I think I can contrive to make things comfortable all ways with her."

"And how do you suppose Mademoiselle will get on without a maid? No, no ; say I will receive the children with pleasure, if they can put up with our children's quarters and fare ; but that our house and plans are so different from what they were at Denbrook, that we must decline Mademoiselle and the maid. Nothing is easier said than that."

"You men are so unreasonable," observed Mrs. Grove, "I wanted to make this stand in the first instance, and you would not consent, and now you coolly ask me to write the most uncomfortable letter I ever had to write in my life, all for want of a little consideration in the first instance."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Grove, looking provokingly impenitent, in spite of his words, "I confess you were

right and I wrong ; but we have had the satisfaction of giving the plan a trial, and found it did not answer."

"I should not care," continued Mrs. Grove, "if it were my sister I had to write to, but being my brother's wife makes it more uncomfortable."

"Not to speak of its being the particular lady in question ; Sarah, the Honourable Mrs. *Alexander Savory*," added Mr. Grove.

"No, that rather lessens my difficulty," said his wife.

"Well, that is true," returned Mr. Grove ; "for to tell the truth, I believe the notion that we are so much indebted to these periodical visits, and that the girls have got all the polish of their education and manners from the instructions and example of Mademoiselle and her pupils, has upset the remains of my good-nature. But my serious grounds are, that really we cannot afford the extravagancies of Mademoiselle in the parlour, and a London lady's-maid in the kitchen. You know how you have been inconvenienced long afterwards ; and besides this, is the mischief both did in their several departments. I do not like the children to get into the way they did with Mademoiselle, and her French morality and folly,—Harry being bold and rude to her face, and all quite ready to quiz her behind her back. If I protect my children in their tender years from bad examples, it would be from such a teacher as this. It is like offering them a stone for bread, to give them contemptibleness where they should look for respectability. Surely this is more important than the imaginary claim of hospitality by which you are haunted."

"Very true," said Mrs. Grove, "but still I feel my task a disagreeable one."

"You are strangely inconsistent in your feelings on such points, my dear," observed Mr. Grove, sorry to press his wife when she showed so much reluctance; "stay another day. Perhaps," added he, smiling, "the post will bring in a bag of money, and then I promise you our proposed three young guests shall make no obstacle to our present impossible autumn excursion. By-the-bye, how late the post is to-day!"

The conversation was here broken in upon by the entrance of Lucy, who had been down to nurse Kettlethwaite, and in her relation of proceedings there, she accounted for the delay of the letters. After Lucy had given her report of the invalid, she continued, "Just before I got to old nurse's, I met Laurence Bolton, with Mr. Frampton. Laurry ran across to me, full of some story about Mrs. Davenport.—Have you heard any thing?"

She was answered in the negative, and Mr. Grove said he knew the Davenports were going to walk to Stockfield to-day.

"Mrs. Davenport has been all the morning at the Boltons,—so Laurence said," replied Lucy; "he said there had been 'such a kettle of fish'—that Mrs. Davenport had been 'riding her high horse,' quarrelled with them all, and put herself into such a fury as never was seen."

Lucy laughed as she told her news.

"Then you do not believe this story, Lucy," said her father.

"Oh, no, papa, not a word of it," said Lucy, "not even though Mr. Frampton came up and pledged himself to every word, saying, he was present through all, and he supposed people would believe his report at last, now the lady had been seen in one of her fancies."

"Something has happened, no doubt," said Mrs. Grove.

"But nothing to the discredit of Mrs. Davenport, I am sure of that, papa!" cried Lucy, warmly.

"I see, my dear Lucy," said her father, smiling, "you think it necessary to carry through your year's championship, even before your mamma and myself."

"To be sure, papa, I do; because I feel my grounds sure," said Lucy; "I am sure one like Mrs. Davenport could not go on without protest with those she has been thrown among. She has only done,—I feel certain,—what I have so often wished to do, but could not. The only way I can keep the peace is at a distance."

"Mrs. Davenport ought to have known her friends before she made them," observed Mrs. Grove. "We know she can preserve distance when it pleases her."

Lucy having some affairs to despatch, here received some orders from her mother, and left the room.

"My dear," said Mr. Grove, "you are always the most severe on Mrs. Davenport of our party. I have never asked you, yet I had rather a fear of it. Do you think Davenport has done a foolish thing?"

"I think he must feel occasionally as I do, that there is a risk," returned Mrs. Grove; "of course, for my own sake, I should have preferred an older person. I have no desire to teach, if Mrs. Davenport were desirous of being taught; and without a change somewhere, we are not likely to assimilate. I am too old to change."

"And she too young, I suppose."

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Grove; "I think she has fine and most sterling qualities; and in spite of a strong, independent, almost eccentric will, a humility that will

penetrate through all, and under her husband's training, will prepare her for an every-day valuable character; those of her stamp, generally are mere boudoir devotees, or drawing-room sentimentalists."

"Well," cried Mr. Grove, highly pleased, for he valued his wife's judgment; "I rejoice in hearing you say all this. I have had my fears about poor Davenport; and was afraid he would add to the number of those who have made the mistake of marrying late, instead of early; but now I revive. I myself have thought, from the first, that I saw a grand stability of purpose, among so much that is queer and incoherent. There is about our pretty bride, a severity and sweetness, a prejudice and candour, that make her interesting both to the feelings and the intellect."

"You have always got on well with her," observed Mrs. Grove.

"And shall, better, now I have heard your real opinion," said Mr. Grove; "I always fancied you could not tolerate her crudities of feeling and opinion."

"I think all may come right in time," said Mrs. Grove; "but the fact is, she does not like me; and even if I were her age, I am not of a character to suit one of her temperament."

"Excuse me there, my dear," said Mr. Grove, smiling, "I think, at her age, you had just her views and her feelings on many subjects; only a reserve kept them in the back-ground."

"And that is just what this young lady cannot at present discern or tolerate," continued Mrs. Grove; "but even if she could, I fear there are obstacles she never will get over."

"Oh, do not think so, my dear," said Mr. Grove, un-

willing to realize that the present position of the parties was permanent ; “ we can never be really estranged from Davenport ; and I sometimes think that if you would condescend to show yourself more, things would be different.”

“ I am too old to change myself or my manner, Horace,” said his wife, “ and these things must take their chance. Lucy is more the companion for so young a lady, and I shall be satisfied with that.”

“ Ah,” sighed Mr. Grove, “ a man must pay a little for such a freak as poor Davenport has played. It certainly makes time and season out of joint.”

“ Remember, I do not complain of Mrs. Davenport,” said Mrs. Grove ; “ she has never neglected any of us ; she has behaved like a lady, and treated us as her husband’s friends. She has even sought opportunities of intercourse and acquaintanceship ; but, as yet, it has been a failure. She has got on with none but you, and I do not complain ; perhaps I scarcely wonder ; I consider it in the nature of things.”

“ It is an old story, my dear,” said Mr. Grove, with something like a sigh ; “ you must take your own course ; but I do think there is something amiss, that with all your powers, there should ever be any short-comings ; and I do think a little warmth, or a little care not to oppose or clash unnecessarily, is all that is wanting in this case. For Davenport’s sake, I am anxious ; and for my sake, you might make an effort. Think what good terms you keep up with others, with far greater drawbacks than our new enthusiastic neighbour.”

“ Younger people, or franker natures, can talk and laugh off first impressions,” said Mrs. Grove, “ and so, I

say, I hope, some day, Lucy will make a friendship, if I cannot."

"Ah, my dear," said Mr. Grove, with a real sigh this time, "that has been your only stumbling-block all through your life. You assume your nature is of a certain stamp, and will not try to change it."

"Horace, I cannot change it," said his wife; "and why should I? Others may be lively and bright; all the world can not be the same."

"I only ask you to appear what you are, my dear, and to show the sympathy you feel," said her husband; "since we have been married, I have never desired it as much as now."

"I should do it awkwardly now, Horace; I should make bad worse," replied Mrs. Grove; "such manners should be learned and fixed in early youth; my time for them was lost, and now is past and gone."

"Well, my dear," returned Mr. Grove, "I do not want to argue, or tease you; but I cannot help thinking, if you had the friendship for Davenport that I have, and if you felt the attraction I do, towards the sweet young creature he has brought among us, the task of sympathy would not be so hard."

"Well, there is something in that," said Mrs. Grove, who was a very candid person, "I believe she has hurt herself in my opinion by her friendship with those she has chosen. She ought to have known better."

"She is not very old, you must remember," observed Mr. Grove.

"*Lucy* is old enough never to have been so blinded," returned Mrs. Grove, "and she has not had half the experience of Mrs. Davenport."

"But Lucy has had a mother instead, my dear," said Mr. Grove, with a smile, half of compliment, half of sympathy.

"A mother sometimes makes a difference—not always," remarked Mrs. Grove, gravely.

Her husband knew she had her own case in her mind, and paused, sorry to have aroused painful remembrances. Perhaps too she was considering what her own assistance had been to her daughter, for she was a conscientious and a humble person. The pause was not long, for the door opened, and the letters were brought in. There were two with broad black borders, announcing the event which has been already mentioned. Both were to Mr. Grove, for with Mrs. Grove, Alice was scarcely acquainted. At the end of her letter she wrote as follows :—

"Grandmamma has been so kind and considerate as to leave me in possession of this house till Christmas, when the term of the agreement is at an end. Since you must come to Brighton on my business, I thought perhaps it might be agreeable that Mrs. Grove and the rest should follow in a few days. Whether I am here or not, the house shall be at your disposal up to Christmas ; and if I stay, it will be a great pleasure to me to make acquaintance with those I have so often desired to know. When you come, we shall be better able to settle the details of the plan," &c. &c.

After the more important points in the letter had been discussed, Mr. Grove read this passage to his wife, and asked her what she thought of it ; himself appearing highly pleased with the idea. "It is just the temptation I needed for getting away for a few weeks," said he, "and the sea is exactly what we wished for Janet ; the only

doubt is, if it is fair to Alice, who might let the house, if she leaves."

"You forget also our proposed three young guests," observed Mrs. Grove, with the first smile that had occurred during their conversation.

"I had indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Grove, amused at his forgetfulness.

He made them no obstacle however, according to his promise; and his wife sat down to write to Mrs. Savory, stating their sudden prospects, and saying she would write as soon as their plans were decided.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was not long after the foregoing matters and the discussions thereupon were concluded, that Mr. and Mrs. Davenport were shown into the drawing-room where Mrs. Grove was then seated. After a few words on the object of their present visit, Mr. Davenport withdrew in order to have a conversation with Mr. Grove on Alice's affairs. The elder and the younger lady were thus left together ; it was the first time they had ever found themselves entirely alone.

An unembarrassed *tête-à-tête* is a fair test of the comparative calibre of intellect and feeling of those engaged in it ;—not of character, of which perhaps a crowd is a better test, as affording some scope for action. Agreement of character however is proverbially no bond of friendship. Similar pursuits, tastes, principles, or feelings, each may become a bond, according to the views of the individual ; and according to the bond adopted, the original aliment of the friendship will vary. There are some that especially demand the nutrition of a *tête-à-tête*. Perhaps the case before us was one of these, since up to the present time it has lingered on, apparently in a state of starvation. Alice had been frequently mentioned, but had never been a subject of discourse ; Mrs. Grove knew too little of her to enter into the warm mode in which Louisa was ready to

discuss her ; and Louisa, in her turn, feeling, as she fancied, a coolness in the terms of appreciating her friend, gladly let the subject pass. For instance, the first time Alice was mentioned, Mrs. Grove had called her "a most estimable young woman." This expression poor Louisa had never been able to forget or forgive, and it had caused her to wince whenever Alice's name was mentioned subsequently. Now there was a change ; Alice's circumstances were in a state fit for discussion ; herself was at present secondary. Besides Louisa, pleased at the prospect of a *tête-à-tête*, which was an opportunity she delighted in, was resolved to forget former failures, and begin afresh. We cannot tell how far her own experience and her husband's representations may have influenced this resolution. The other lady having declared herself "too old to change," cannot be supposed to have been affected by any influences external or internal, and therefore must be left to interpret herself.

Louisa in the first instance was able to throw some light on Alice's present peculiar position, with which the Groves, though connected, were but partially acquainted. Louisa, frank as she was, had never carried her frankness so far as to make a piece of gossip of her friend's history, with one who she believed did not justly appreciate that friend.

"We feared that Alice was in an uncomfortable situation with the Sidneys," said Mrs. Grove, after the above explanation ; "I do not know them personally, but from what I have heard, I should guess that poor Alice's task has been a hard one."

"And one I am sure," said Louisa, warmly, though a little struggle threatened to take place on the remembrance

of the offending words, 'most estimable young woman,'—
"one I am sure no high principled person but an Alice
could have submitted to."

"You cannot speak of her more highly than I think,"
said Mrs. Grove; "and you may judge of her merit when
I tell you, that I only know her through the report of the
Sidney family. We have formed our opinion of her by
the terms in which *they* mentioned her, and by her own
acts."

"Alice's character will stand any test by which it may
be tried," said Louisa, imagining silently an exculpation
for the offending words, 'most estimable young woman.'
"Her peculiarity is her many-sided character; whether it
is judgment, action, intellect, accomplishments, or conver-
sation required,—each seems her especial forte."

"The more she deserves your commendation," observed
Mrs. Grove, "the more has it been to her credit to bear
the society and the seclusion she has been doomed to, of
late. I do most sincerely wish that her grandmother may
have made a change in her intentions; I should grieve
over a mind and talents like hers being wasted or cramped
in the situation she was lately about to engage in."

"I never know what to wish for Alice," said Louisa;
"I cannot think she would be *wasted* as an instructress.
She seems exactly fitted to form the mind and disposition;
and how could she do this as well as in tuition? If she
would consent under any circumstances to make our house
her home, delightful as that would be to me, I scarcely
desire it; I think there would not be the same field for
her exertions. I do not see how she could any where be
the leader she ought, except at the head of a school."

"Or except she chose to marry," said Mrs. Grove,

smiling. "She might not be a leader, but she would have a sphere for action."

"Oh, I think that depends so entirely on circumstances," said Louisa. "Besides, Alice is not likely to marry, and I do not know who there can be fit for her. I do not think there are more than a couple of men in a generation capable of making tolerable husbands, and it is very unlikely that either of these should suit Alice. Oh, no," added she, smiling, "Alice shall not marry, I have made up my mind about that. I cannot bear histories that end with a wedding."

"I do not see why Alice's history should *end* with her marriage," observed Mrs. Grove; "new situations of this kind, with new responsibilities, are calculated rather to begin a life than to end one."

"Well, practically, that is quite true," replied Louisa; "only it is so dull and common-place to marry; every body marries. And besides, considering the sort of people men are, I believe I have a little fear that Alice might disappoint me in her choice. Oh, that would be ten thousand times worse than any thing that has yet befallen her; do you not think so, Mrs. Grove?"

"It would indeed be grievous, very grievous," answered Mrs. Grove, in a tone that quite satisfied Louisa, and made her feel very grateful.

"Now I like her," thought she; "she believes me, and does not treat me like a simpleton."

Mrs. Grove here mentioned to Louisa, the hope she had of becoming personally acquainted with Alice, and entered into an account of the Brighton plan they were revolving. Louisa saw only one drawback, which was, that by such an arrangement, she should be robbed of the chance of

Alice coming immediately to Branstone, since her husband had agreed, if possible, to bring her back with him.

"Our visit would not be for long—a month, at the longest," said Mrs. Grove; "Janet has never recovered from her severe illness, and we were anxious to take her to the sea. Our temptation at present, is the opportunity of having a young friend here, as curate, an old pupil of Mr. Grove's; he is just ordained, and wrote the other day, to make the offer of his services."

Louisa saw the suitableness of the whole scheme, and entered into it warmly. She felt how necessary change was to Mr. Grove, as well as the rest, and could recommend Brighton, at this late season, as just the proper place.

Mrs. Grove here, in a very simple manner, asked Louisa to undertake the superintendence of the schools, and one or two other parish matters, during their absence.

Louisa coloured, from surprise and pleasure. "Oh, most willingly," said she, "only I shall be afraid of spoiling your plans; you will find a sad declension on your return."

Mrs. Grove gave her quiet smile, so faint, it was scarcely a smile, and said she would run the risk.

Some details were entered into, and it was settled, that if the excursion took place, Louisa should spend a morning at the Parsonage, to be prepared for her undertaking. Mr. Davenport's appearance put an end to the ladies' discourse, and shortly afterwards the visitors were on their road homewards.

"I hope I was not too long," said Mr. Davenport, in an apologetic tone; "I did not forget you, but there was so

much to be said and settled, I could not release you before."

"I was not wishing for you," returned Louisa, laughing; "I have had a most agreeable talk, and was sorry, very sorry, when it came to an end."

Mr. Davenport showed by manner, rather than words, how pleased he was.

"Mrs. Grove was pleasant," continued Louisa, "because she let me see more of her feelings."

"That is because you have given her an opportunity of doing so," observed Mr. Davenport.

"I have not been wanting in this before," said Louisa; "I have wished, and tried to get better acquainted, but I never before could penetrate in the least, through the mail of reserve and coldness that opposed my attacks."

"Reserve!" cried Mr. Davenport, "that is not fair; you yourself have remarked, how very freely Mrs. Grove expresses her sentiments, and how easy you always find it to discuss subjects with her."

"Very true," returned Louisa, "but still she is reserved in showing or expressing her feelings; or perhaps I should say, her kind feeling. She would talk freely enough, for instance, of the poor and unfortunate, and would let fall, true and wise maxims on general principles, relating to their case; but she would not show the sympathy for those in trouble, which one desired to see; I do not mean she does not feel it, but she would not show it to me. This I call reserve, and if not reserve, then it is coldness, neither of which I like."

"Then what happened to-day?"

"Mrs. Grove was not more lively or full of smiles than usual," returned Louisa; "but she treated me differently;

—you may smile, Henry, but I am sure it was not my fancy, I am sure she did; she behaved just as if she thought me no longer a child, as she has hitherto done; or as if some kind soul had whispered to her that I was a harmless creature, and had neither claws nor sting.”

“Your eyes are suddenly opened to new views, Louisa,” said her husband, smiling, in allusion to the morning’s scene at the Close; “and thus you see with new sight. Mrs. Grove is not a person likely to change.”

“You may laugh, Henry,” said Louisa, “but I feel perfectly certain, that Mrs. Grove’s manner was as different to me as her treatment.”

“Treatment!” cried Mr. Davenport, “that is something more tangible. Pray, how did she treat you?”

“You do not deserve to be told one word more, Henry, for your insulting disbelief,” said Louisa, laughing; “men are always so conceited on points of manner; they think nobody understands manner but themselves, and believe nothing but what they see with their own eyes.”

“And what should I have seen to-day?” asked Mr. Davenport.

“Well, that is tolerably humble for a man,” said Louisa; “but I will tell you first what you would have heard. You would have heard Mrs. Grove and myself pass a resolution, that there were not more than a couple of men in a generation, fit to be married.”

“Then I should say that Mrs. Grove and yourself have had good luck, in your respective generations,” answered Mr. Davenport, smiling; “and now, what should I have seen?”

“You would have seen Mrs. Grove put these parish and school books of hers into my hand, and ask me to under-

take affairs in her absence. Now, Henry, what do you say to that?"

Nothing could have been more satisfactory to Louisa than her husband's silence, and the expression of his countenance. If he was surprised, however, he was also pleased.

Louisa continued, "Well, Henry, what do you say to that?"

"That I am very well pleased," replied Mr. Davenport.

"Ah, you proud crafty creature!" cried Louisa, laughing; "you are sensible that a confession of surprise is a confession of defeat."

"I am too well satisfied to stumble at being surprised," said Mr. Davenport.

"In return for that admission," continued Louisa, "I will confess, that I think our improved understanding, perhaps, was, in part, owing to the friendly aid of a *tête-à-tête*. After all, that is the only thing in the world for rightly knowing people. It is a test, like none other. In a *tête-à-tête*, people must be serious; at least, they must be serious on serious subjects: there is not the same room for vanity and folly, nor even for stiffness, reserve, or pride. People must, at any rate, make something of an approach towards appearing what they really are. Oh, I never could make a friendship with one who could not stand this test!"

"You think mankind should stand a *tête-à-tête*, as a horse should stand fire," observed Mr. Davenport.

"And be the better for the trial," continued Louisa; "depend upon it, Henry, neither man nor woman is good for much, who cannot stand this ordeal. Do you not know, Henry, I put up with you, at last, because you could bear a *tête-à-tête* so manfully."

"What! I suppose on the fifth of February?" said Mr. Davenport.

"Say, rather, the fifth of May," returned Louisa; "you certainly were always great in a *tête-à-tête*, but that day you surpassed yourself."

"I am rejoiced to hear you think so," said Mr. Davenport, in a pleasant rallying tone; "the end satisfied me, I confess."

"The end!" cried Louisa, laughing; "I was not thinking of the end; "it was the beginning that charmed me; such a bold disregard of all considerations, external and internal. I still do wonder, how we both ever got through the difficulties and perils of that forced march."

"Let us say, all's well that ends well," said her husband.

"You might be worse than you are, Henry," observed the wife, with a grateful look, while, secretly, she felt and did homage to the affection and gentleness of a man, whose equal, she certainly believed, that generation, at least, did not contain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE plans in agitation took place exactly as seemed probable. On the following Monday, the two gentlemen departed together for Brighton; the next day Mrs. Bligh and her two little children, for Louisa made her bring both, arrived at Branstone; and the week following Mrs. Grove and her family joined her husband at Brighton, leaving their young friend Mr. Thorp, who had been at the parsonage a few days previously, in possession of the house and parish. But before arriving at the events of this period, there are some preliminary details to go through. And first, with respect to Alice's affairs, an account of which will be best despatched by extracts from the letters from Brighton. One from Alice to Louisa, dated on the evening of the Tuesday, ran thus:—

My dear Louisa,

My kind and considerate guardians, though not exactly guardians, have taken upon themselves all letters, as business matters, but yours. I cannot tell you what a relief this is to me; for I have dreaded these letters almost as much as the events of this day. It has been in all ways a painful one to me. Such a day of bustle and business when I should have especially sought repose, or at any rate, the society of those who would have at least borne in mind the solemn thoughts which such scenes

bring, if they could not look upon their loss with such feelings as I can. I who have been so constantly with dear grandmamma, and witnessed how much she suffered, learned to value her, and now feel her loss in a way which those who estranged themselves from her cannot do. How much they have lost ! Yet they do not know it. What a different mother and grandmother they would now lament, if they had not disregarded and deserted her ! But I must not talk on points that touch them, since my patience has been more tried by what I have witnessed this week, than by any thing that went before. I longed to be allowed to attend the funeral ; for though there were her sons and grandsons, there was not one who was a mourner. Is not this too shocking ? All left the house immediately after the opening of the will. I am glad to say it was not as bad as I feared. Grandmamma was so kind as to attend to what she knew was my feeling. She has left me £100. a year, entirely my own, and part of the furniture of the London house. There was a codicil to her will, which was produced, to the amaze of every body. I am sure I thought I had not left grandmamma all the time we have been at Brighton : and Phœbe was more amazed still. She would not believe it was all right, till told how it happened, and then we all remembered enough to satisfy every body on that point. I dare say you remember the day we all went to the Dyke. It proved an eventful day for me as well as you. It was the only time I left grandmamma for any thing beyond a walk, and I only did so then at her especial desire. She said she liked you, and wished me to be with you, and that she hoped you would marry Mr. Davenport after all. I was rather unwilling to leave her, since Dr. Roper was to bring Mr.

Perry that day, and they were to have a regular consultation on her case. She told me that this was the reason she wished me to be absent, as they would want the drawing-room, and that I might as well be out of the house as in my own room, or in the way. You know grandmamma's decided manner, and will see how it was I acquiesced, and was never surprised that she never urged me about going out at any other time. She always wanted me to be by her side after this; as you may remember the report of the medical men was very desponding. All the Sidneys are fond of scheming, and you will see that grandmamma was as capable of thwarting all who opposed her, as any of the rest. She did not use any artifice in words, but managed quite to blind every one of us. Before and after this consultation, Dr. Roper examined myself and Phœbe, and all who saw her, as to the soundness of grandmamma's mind. This seemed the most natural thing in the world. When I returned that day from the Dyke, I found grandmamma low, but very kind; kinder to me than she had ever been before. Phœbe told me there had been a consultation; that Dr. Roper and Mr. Perry came with another gentleman; that they were not long in her room, but consulted together in the drawing-room about three quarters of an hour, and then visited her again before they left. Phœbe had sat with her during their absence, and was in the room when they returned. She observed nothing particular; but now it turns out that the stranger was a lawyer, and that he had taken measures for a codicil to her will, according to her request, which was drawn up with all legal accuracy. She had nearly the whole of her property at her own disposal: the remainder, which is comparatively trifling, goes to

her children according to her husband's will. You will see the introduction to her bequest some day, which is curious, even to a stranger. She requested the three gentlemen who knew about the will to be present at her funeral, and they were very explicit on all matters after the reading of the codicil. Nobody blamed them at all. I think the general feeling was like mine: 'it was well it was no worse,' for it was taken for granted I was anxious to make grandmamma leave me all she had to leave. Phœbe is the most dissatisfied of the party; since my uncles, who had trusted to her, declared that she had not kept due watch, and that she deserved no recompense at their hands. Think of all this, and more, being said before me! After the will was read, I was treated as if I were not present. I do think they really forgot I was there, they were so engrossed with their own concerns, and so satisfied with the result. The scene was too uncomfortable a one for me to enter upon. I thought grandmamma's words when speaking of Mr. Grove seemed exemplified—money truly does harden the heart. Nothing but meriment went on among them. I hope my kind legacy will not have this effect on me; you would suppose there was danger of it, if you had heard the only speech made me on the occasion.....

Louisa received also an account from her husband, which entered more into particulars as to the behaviour of the relations, of which he did not hesitate to declare his unmitigated disgust; both at their disregard of the commonest propriety of feeling, and their behaviour to Alice.

The preamble to Mrs. Sidney's codicil was written, in

the first instance, by herself, in pencil, and also copied by the lawyer. It was as follows:—

“I wish it to be understood, that the change I am about to make, is entirely-and solely my own act. I expected Alice Sidney, my granddaughter, would strive, like the rest of her family, to get all she could out of me,—I resolved she should not have a penny. I was attracted to observe her, by perceiving her several times act in the most foolish way, with respect to her expectations, and I found she never took advantage of the many opportunities that occurred of favouring her own interests. She alone has prevented my disinheriting all those who have deserted me in my last days. But for my knowledge of her wishes, I would with one stroke of my pen even leave all I have to leave to Alice Sidney: but I know this would pain her, and perhaps would make her like those whose ingratitude now pierces me. Next to her, I would wish to make the Rev. Mr. Grove, my cousin’s grandson, a rich man, and do not do so only because he is a good man, and I wish him to remain so. Neither he nor his wife care for money, so I know they would not thank me for mine. The Bible says ‘the love of money is the root of all evil.’ I have lived a long life before I could agree to this; but I see now that money hardens the heart: my children would have been affectionate and dutiful but for their love of money. What they have been, let themselves judge! Even though they will not know this small change in the disposal of my property till I am dead and buried, and forgotten, I fear their anger. They have bruised and wounded me with their contests and their jangles, and even though now dying alone, I feel under their command. Alice Sidney is the only one of my grandchildren

whom I neglected, and the only one who has shown me kindness or love ; yet I dare not reward her. I wish to remark, that what she has, was gained to her by her open, unsuspicious treatment of an old woman like me. I never met the same in a young person. She has no secrets, no cunning, no sly tricks, or suspicious thoughts. Though I have been shut up in one room for months, I have heard and seen all that goes on. She keeps the door open when visitors call, and never talks in a whisper." After this came the bequest.

On this extract, Mr. Davenport made the following remarks ; " For Alice's sake, my dear Louisa, you must not be too severe on the tone of poor Mrs. Sidney's observations ; let us be satisfied with the epithet which I have affixed to her name, and which, until to-day, I never heard applied to a lost friend, with patience. It struck me, as but too applicable in the present instance. This epithet was the only show of feeling which was exhibited this morning. Grove says that the education and minds of this family, have been formed upon that sole and only principle—the love of, and devotion to—wealth. They have framed their characters, principles, manners, and even their religion, on money. Mrs. Sidney was too correct in her bitter charges, but she forgot how much she had fostered the love she now repudiated, and was incapable of perceiving, that by her last words and acts, her own heart still was honouring wealth above all things. I expect you will put a fine upon me for this expression of my feelings, on my return ; and though I have been enlarging, rather to please and pacify you, I am very willing to submit. Shall it be Harry Grove, or the new West Window—or both ?"

Louisa had enough to engage her thoughts in her hus-

band's absence, and what with matters at home and abroad, and with her guest in the house, her time was fully occupied, for, as it happened, every thing came upon her at the same time.

After the Thursday's scene at the Close, Louisa had felt an extraordinary awkwardness at the idea of calling next at the Boltons. She had never stood upon any ceremony with them, and owing to the singing lessons, it would have been quite remarkable—quite taking a step—to keep away. She was entirely at a loss what to do, and gained no help from her husband: when the difficulty was decided for her, or, at least, the difficulty was deferred for a space. She heard that it was considered in the village, that Mr. Davenport and Mr. Grove had lost a friend, and that it would not be agreeable for them to visit or be visited, till after the funeral. Louisa was the last in the world to attend to such etiquettes, in the case of one so far removed from her as Mrs. Sidney; but considering her husband's presence at the funeral, and her own peculiar position with the Boltons, she submitted, without expostulation, to the popular expectation; made no calls for the rest of the week, and appeared at church in a black dress. By this blind obedience to decorum, she found, to her surprise, that the chief part of her difficulty concerning the Boltons was relieved; for the rule was, that they should pay her the first visit. A visit of this sort, in form, in the drawing-room at Branstone, was a very different thing from her lively passing calls, or her morning sojourns at the Close. The idea of thus meeting first, was such a relief to her, that she began to think, whether she would not make a change altogether in her views, and become, at once, a convert to form and etiquette. But Louisa had

more true serious feeling than to wish to pass over the affair in this way. She did not shrink from confessing herself wrong, and acting upon it. She did not put the whole blame upon the others, and consider herself the party aggrieved. Louisa had a keen sense of the rights of things, and did not want a third person to tell her that she had got herself into a scrape, and that to get out of it properly she must sacrifice something or other. She earnestly hoped and prayed that the sacrifice might not be character or heart.

The delay gained her another advantage most valuable, in the arrival of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Bligh ; and the easiest and best mode of entering into her views, will be to relate a conversation with that lady.

CHAPTER XIX.

"My difficulty," said Louisa to Mrs. Bligh, after she had related the history of her friendship with the Boltons, "my difficulty is twofold: first, what to do; and when that is settled, how to behave. I have, with whatever alleviations, deceived them and myself into a belief of real friendship. I feel I ought, and I determine I will, carry this—this friendship—out in act, just as if nothing had happened. I think I shall then feel less to blame in the change I am aware I must make both in feeling and manner. What do you say to this?"

"I must first ask," replied Mrs. Bligh, "what sort of friendly act you had been contemplating?"

Louisa explained how nearly she had pledged herself to befriend Laurence Bolton in his college education, and said that she wished to hold herself bound to do so, just as she had intended.

"Then your plan is to buy off your friendship?" asked Mrs. Bligh, coolly. "I ought to congratulate you, Louisa, for so soon finding that after all gold is not of so sublunary a nature, but possesses qualities of an extraordinary ethereal character. However, after all, you have but made the discovery of the philosopher and the poet:—

Gold a halo bright can fling,
O'er the meanest paltriest thing;

Gold can make the wrong the right,
Straight can black transform to white ;
Gold can wash,—Ah, doubt it ne'er !
Swarthiest Ethiop, spotless fair."

"You are worse than Henry," said Louisa, colouring.

"Well, is it not so?" pursued her sister; "do you not propose to buy yourself out of the scrape by money?—This is pretty well for one who despises wealth. What would become of you if you were poor?"

"All this is not fair," cried Louisa; "this is the fault of talking over such things instead of doing them. You will make me repent consulting you!"

"You shall not do that," said Mrs. Bligh, "you know I must have my say, and then I will make an end."

"Well, I confess you are as much better than Henry as a woman is better than a man," said Louisa, smiling, "he has his say, but makes no end. But to return to my dilemma: perhaps my exact motive for wishing what I propose, is rather selfish than otherwise. It is on my own account rather than theirs that I would make this expenditure. After what has happened, I feel afraid of not doing it; it seems a shabby come off. And if even I were to devote the same sum to some other similar purpose, I should not feel satisfied in the same way."

"And to which party do you think your idea does the most honour,—to yourself, or your new friends?" asked Mrs. Bligh.

Louisa coloured and felt ashamed, on more accounts than one. "Ah," said she, "I see, Clara, you mean to make me feel the full weight of the weakness of my conduct. But I will bear with it; better, your raillery—bet-

ter, almost any thing, than falling among those who would blind me to that weakness."

"But that is no answer to my question, Louisa."

"Nor do you want it," returned the other; "you only want to try if I can doubt, as to whether my offer would be accepted, under the circumstances."

"And you will not doubt?"

"If I doubted, I should never have thought of the scheme," replied Louisa; "if I had reason to doubt, my present difficulties would scarcely exist,—at least, they would be greatly modified. I am afraid I have seen enough to remove all doubt upon that score, and as it is so, I feel grateful to the characters who will allow me so easily to find a sacrifice, and perhaps one that may not be altogether thrown away. I still have hopes of Laurence."

"I do not know that I object to your design," said Mrs. Bligh, "but I believe I rather hope that you may never reflect upon it with satisfaction; there seems something in it, to me, approaching to a reverence of Mammon. We must see what Henry's unbiased opinion is. An amendment, I would propose, most decidedly; and that is, that whatever sum you may expend upon Laurence, should be in fitting him for any thing but one of the learned professions. The Boltons are not made for philosophers."

"Now I do not like those family prejudices!" cried Louisa; "how do you know what the elder brothers would have been, if they had had the opportunity of education? Poor Mrs. Bolton has often said, with tears in her eyes, that she was too poor to do justice to her family, and I know she had no friends to help her. Now Lau-

rence is young enough to become any thing; and, separated from the rest, he may be very different."

"As he has been already," observed Mrs. Bligh; "if we can make an honest man of him, it would satisfy my ambition; he would be the hero of the family; but *we* are no alchymists, to turn brass to gold."

"Ah, Clara!" cried Louisa, "I see you are as determined as Alice, and as prejudiced as Henry. I declare among you I fall from bad to worse, every day."

"In return for your compliment, of comparing me to your very best friends," said Mrs. Bligh, "I am inclined to notice a remark of yours, which, just now, I let pass by. You said that Mrs. Bolton had no friends to help her; how do you know that?"

"By the way she always talked," replied Louisa; "and I never could help regretting that Henry had done nothing for them. I call what he did for Laurence, *nothing*; because there was a stop put to his intentions, and the youth had so short a time to gain any thing. I cannot help wondering at Henry's neglect, considering how kind he is to every body, and how thankfully they would have received any benefits. Mrs. Bolton expresses herself so grateful for any small favour he did do, that it always made me feel quite grieved and ashamed. Indeed, it was partly the reason of my feeling so much for the Boltons."

"And why do you feel so sure of Henry's neglect?"

"Why!" cried Louisa, surprised; "why it is a fact, is it not? I said something to Henry about it one day, and he gave me some laughing answer, that satisfied me he had never done more than assist occasionally, by loans, as Mrs. Bolton's words implied."

"Dear Mr. Davenport's delicacy was too great to confess, I suppose," said Mrs. Bligh.

"If you prove Mrs. Bolton has behaved with a shabby secrecy to me," said Louisa, "I must not chide you for laughing at her; but except Henry has bound her to silence, I cannot believe it. How could it answer any purpose? I must know, sooner or later."

"I will not meddle with Mrs. Bolton or her motives," said Mrs. Bligh, "I will only discourse on facts, and I must say I think Henry might as well have told you; but he did not know what a simpleton he had to do with; and he, to say the truth, has quirks and crotchets on such subjects, which no reasonable creature can enter into. He will submit to most things rather than the imputation of goodness or charitableness; but I have no scruple in exposing my brother to his wife, and shall leave you two to settle the matter between yourselves. But now, Louisa," continued the merry lady, searching through her sister's basket, "give me some work! I cannot tell you this long story with my hands before me. Ah, hemming!—that just suits me; it demands no more than the intellect of an idiot! Well, now for my *Horæ Boltonianæ*, as Henry would call it. Mr. Bolton was a kind sort of easy man; nothing seemed easier than to manage him, and nothing was, so long as you permitted him two licenses: first, to pass by all responsibility and all extraneous exertion, such as was not absolutely demanded by his position as Rector of the place. He kept up the Sunday services as he found them. He visited all who sent to him. He appointed the schoolmaster and mistress, and gave the children a dinner at Christmas. The other hazardous point was the interference with, or even the mention of, his pecuniary affairs.

Nobody was acquainted with his family circumstances ; but except from his constant plea of poverty, it would have been believed that he had ample means for the needs of his family, though a large one. Henry however came into possession of his uncle's estate with very grand notions. He thought his first business was to befriend the clergyman, and as it happened, the clergyman had precisely the same views ; so Henry was to send Stephen, the eldest son, to college. Henry was then about as zealous, though not quite as unguarded as other friends of mine I could mention ; and being fresh from his books, he examined Stephen himself. Finding him sharp and ready, though not of the highest possible tone, he acquiesced in his parent's wish, and with a good deal of trouble procured him admission at some college. Every thing was settled, and a summons arrived for the new pupil ; when the truth came out. Mr. Stephen had all along protested and declared he never would submit to the drudgery of a learned education. Having warned his parents of this, he was content to let things take their course. He was satisfied with his intermediate obedience, and his mother flattered herself that this was a sign that all his protestations had been mere random talk. But the end of the college scheme was a grand scene, with the post chaise at the door. Henry was sent for. The papa had walked out of the house, the mamma was fainting, the sisters crying, the maids bringing burnt feathers and hartshorn, the men strapping the luggage on to the chaise, and the traveller not forthcoming. His mother was sure he had made for the river, and sent up to his room to see that all the guns and pistols were in their places. After an agitated search, the young gentleman was found in the tool-house, de-

vising a new stirrup-spur, after a fashion of his own. Without any embarrassment, he repeated his determination to Henry,—said he was sorry, and laid all the blame on his mother. So the chaise was sent away, the portmanteaus unpacked, Henry paid the expenses, and all things returned to their usual course; except that Mrs. Bolton fell into a nervous way, and cast out sundry hints that poor Stephen had not been fairly used; that while preparing for college, he was becoming unfit for farming; that farming was his choice, and that it was no use to fight against nature. So Henry agreed to lay out the same sum, in setting his *protégé* up in the farming line. Stephen's next step was to marry; and he chose the daughter of a second-rate sort of road-side inn. She was a pretty little pert girl, who used to dress smart, and act Hebe, in long ringlets, to the coaches, as they changed horses. This match vexed his parents more than any thing, but, as his mother said, 'What could he do, poor fellow, he was in love?' Stephen has twice been driven to compound with his creditors, but, as his mother said, 'What could he do, poor fellow, he had not money enough to pay his debts?' I don't believe Henry was weak enough to help him much after the first time. Now for the next son, Edward. He was tried at a lawyer's, at an apothecary's, and last of all as a commercial traveller; but none suited him, and he is now trying his fortunes among some grade of turf men. Every body calls him random, and that is an adequate excuse. Henry spent some four or five hundred pounds on him at one time, and has now compounded for a yearly sum, which he pays Mrs. Bolton. You see Henry has his scrapes to get out of, like the rest of us. Nelson is the next son. He has

cost every body less trouble and less money than any of the sons, and therefore he is not a favourite at home. He is a hearty, wild fellow, and picked up education enough for the sea, for which he was always intended, as his godfather was an admiral ; but the admiral died, doing nothing for Nelson, and he, like the rest, fell into Henry's hands, who got him a very good appointment, and fitted him out with more personal pleasure than any of the rest. He longed to spend more than the necessary outfit upon the youth, simply because he had spent so much more on the other brothers ; but as he had no wife, I took upon myself to prevent him. So in revenge he made a handsome present to the second daughter, Elizabeth, who just then married. Her husband was a retired apothecary,—a widower with several children, tolerably well to do in the world. Henry thought it very unfair that all the sons should be noticed because they were extravagant and self-willed, and not the daughters, merely because they did not ask for any thing, or want it ; so he made this present, and soon after sent the youngest girl, Agnes, to school.—She is the most hopeful of the lot, by the bye. William he helped into an attorney's office in the spring ; but nobody expects he will be bright enough to continue there. You know about dear Laurry ; and there is only one more left, Bob, for whom Henry has done nothing beyond bringing knives and whips from London, whenever he goes. And so ends my biography of the Bolton boobies. What do you say to it, Louisa ?”

“ The worst part to my mind is Mrs. Bolton's reserve to me, on Henry's assistance,” replied Louisa ; “ she might at any rate have assumed his help as a fact, whereas

she really did almost the opposite. Are you sure Henry did not bind her to silence?"

"Quite sure; and sure that she would have been frank, if you had not been ignorant."

"Ah, she must have seen I was ignorant," said Louisa, considering. "But, Clara, I see you have a very low opinion of Mrs. Bolton,—you think her mean and untrue."

"I do certainly think she does not much care what she says or does, or how she exposes herself and deceives others, as long as she compasses her point, and is able to live on in an undisturbed manner. In all her troubles with her family, she has always looked to Henry for money, trouble, thought, and time. She has never made, or offered to make, the smallest sacrifice; and I really believe, since she has been a widow, she considers she can claim Henry's services as a right. It provokes me when she has, no one knows how much more, than £1000. a year."

"I am sorry, very sorry, to give up Mrs. Bolton, as I am obliged to do the rest," said Louisa; "I thought her weak, and not as sensible as I fancied at first; but still I believed her more true and thoughtful than her family. She talks so well on trouble and trial, and looks upon this world in such a true light."

"It is true," replied Mrs. Bligh, "and I confess her mode of treating subjects, especially serious subjects, together with her affectionate manner, was enough to attract one who chose to be attracted. I told Henry I was not surprised. He thought it wonderful that any one could not at once pierce through the superficialness of manner.

He did not consider the impression that might be made on youth and inexperience unwarned."

"I perceive your sly reproof, Clara," said Louisa, "but I do think Henry should have told me some of these facts. How differently I should have seen and heard all things! That is the worst of Henry; he never gives his reasons."

"He is a queer creature in some points," said his sister, laughing, "but before long he will teach you to observe and store up every word he says. You will find it worth the trouble."

"Yes," replied Louisa, "that is true, I see his words are worth more than I thought them at first. But he might as well have been a little more explicit, and advised me more, till I understood him better. You know I was so very new here."

"I thought he did advise you."

"In general terms, a little," replied Louisa; "I knew he did not like the Boltons as well as the Groves, and that he wished me to take to the latter. But really, Clara, if you had experienced the difference of manner of the two ladies to me, as a stranger, you would not have wondered at my feelings."

"Well, have I not said I did not so much wonder?" returned the elder lady.

"Then you are a dear kind creature!" exclaimed Louisa, "as good as Alice, and ten thousand times as sensible as the great Henry, with all his wisdom and profundity. But if women have any sense at all in them, they are always better guides, as well as pleasanter ones, than the wisest sage the world ever saw."

"We all know," cried Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "men are

shocking creatures ; but wives learn to look upon them with a magnanimous toleration.

These reflections led Louisa back again to the subject of Alfred Jenappe, whose conduct had been but slightly discussed in the sketch Louisa had given of the scene of the Bolton offence. " I am sure," added she, after some animadversion, " the example of such things, and the sight of such men as Alfred Jenappe, are enough to make us give up the race of man as altogether hopeless."

" No, not give them up, only wait till you see them tried really and thoroughly," returned Mrs. Bligh, " and that in some cases takes a longer time than people are willing to wait."

" Or as in Alice's case," continued Louisa, fearful of allowing her friend to be blamed by implication, " than opportunity allows."

" And then what happens?" pursued Mrs. Bligh, in a serious tone, which appeared much more so, from its contrast to her usual gay manner ; " What happens? Providence interposes, and rescues the victim. One as good as Alice, is never allowed to fall a sacrifice, in the same way as the thoughtless and the wilfully blind."

" Oh, that one could feel quite sure of this !" exclaimed Louisa, warmly.

" Well, I do feel quite sure and satisfied about it," returned Mrs. Bligh.

" Ah, Clara !" said Louisa, " it is very well for us, who have decent sort of husbands, to say this ; but how many amiable, and even religious women, have had very bad husbands?"

" Well, perhaps they were bad themselves when they married ; by bad, I mean, they did not act on religious

and sound grounds; were either blinded to the truth by worldly prospects, or vanity, or undue affection, or perhaps did not think much about it, but looked upon marriage as a sort of ceremony, it was highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to go through, at least, once in their lives."

"It would be very satisfactory to believe all this," returned Louisa, "but it seems to me a happy fancy. What, now, do you say to the case of Abigail and Nabal?"

"I say I will not judge cases out of my own age and country," replied Mrs. Bligh, "much more under such a dispensation as that of the Jews, which is one it is quite impossible for us to realize or understand. Do we not know that our Lord raised the principles and practices of His followers, in this very particular?—and why should we doubt that Christians will be helped, if they act by Christian rules?"

"What an easy way that seems of looking upon the question!" cried Louisa, "but yet it does not at all satisfy me; for how do we know that the trial of a bad or inferior husband may not be the very thing for perfecting the character of some people?"

"It may be so, certainly," said Mrs. Bligh, smiling, "though I cannot say it presents a very fascinating picture of a character, abstractedly. However, you will not say, I suppose, that the lady chooses to marry the bad husband, for this reason."

"No, no," replied Louisa, laughing, "my lady, at any rate, shall not profess any reason so grotesque."

"Well, and if she marries on any of the inferior ones I before suggested,—worldly prospects, undue affection, or

vanity," continued Mrs. Bligh, "probably she *does* want something to raise her tone of principle and feeling; and if a bad husband does this, it is a happy thing for her. But still, this comes round again to my point. If she had been a higher Christian, she would neither have married a bad man, nor have needed such a chastisement."

"But surely you forget the hard cases there are in the world, Clara," said Louisa; "young people, engaging themselves suddenly, or parents compelling their daughters to marry, from worldly motives."

"Let us leave your imaginary cases, Louisa," said Mrs. Bligh, "and, after your friend Alice's practice, consider a particular case; and this case shall be her own. Let us look upon her, engaged as she was, and view her at the point of having to reply to Alfred's letter, proposing the five years' suspension of the engagement. Instead of the decided dismissal she sent him, suppose she had consented to his proposal; or suppose she had written a letter of affection, or in any other way had endeavoured to make up matters, or keep the affair in existence?"

"As the Sidneys in London, and the Bolton party here, suggested," interposed Louisa; "the Boltons were so very inconsistent,—and I think even Emma joined—in calling the unknown lady, cold and indifferent, severe and unforgiving."

"Well, I say, suppose she had acted so as to please such people?" continued Mrs. Bligh.

"It would either have made no difference at all to Alfred," replied Louisa, "or have deferred Lizzy's hopes for a time."

"Well, suppose the last?"

"He would have resumed his correspondence with

Alice, as he proposed, and things would have appeared smooth for the same time," replied Louisa.

"Well, let the time be until this unexpected news of Alice's fortune, reaches him," pursued Mrs. Bligh.

"Ah, I see what you mean!" cried Louisa; "if it turns out enough to satisfy his mean soul, all the past would be smoothed over. Alice would be entreated to join her faithful and devoted Alfred, and their trials and torments would end with a happy marriage."

"If Alice had thus acted, on feeling, instead of principle," continued Mrs. Bligh; "if she had blinded herself to the sin of his conduct, and only considered the pain of condemning and giving up one she had thought so good and loved so truly, she would have approached to one of your instances; would she not?—a high-minded woman, with a low-principled and heartless husband."

"But Alice never could, or would have done so!" cried Louisa, warmly; "Alice never could, or would, have given one more thought, to a man who had betrayed such a contemptible spirit. If she had done so, she would cease to be Alice."

Then Alice would *not* have afforded a specimen to the world, of an approach to one of your instances," returned Mrs. Bligh, "or if she had done so, you consider she would cease to be Alice, which means, I suppose, that she would cease to retain your very high esteem. And this is all I have been endeavouring to prove."

"Certainly, it is true in this case," said Louisa; "I rejoice that I cannot deny it."

"And how can we say that the same sort of explanation may not be given in other cases of a similar sort, if duly examined?" asked Mrs. Bligh; "People do not act fearlessly

by Christian rules ; that is, they do not act by faith, and then they get into mazes and labyrinths, out of which there seems no egress."

"I am glad that you, who have seen the world, Clara, can talk in this way," observed Louisa.

"Well, all I ask in return for my piece of argument," said Mrs. Bligh, "is, that you will endeavour to form your theories from facts, in future, and if you try to extend that plan, from this subject to all others, I think we shall all be the better for it."

"I do think, Clara," cried Louisa, laughing, "if all advisers and counsellors were as agreeable, as well as, as sage as you and Alice, there would be more goodness, as well as more wisdom in the world. But experienced people generally are so cold in their feelings, as well as worldly in their principles, that it gives one a fit of sickness to stay and listen to them."

"With your advantages, then," observed Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "what must we expect to see you grow to? In half a dozen years you must be shown about at sixpence a head, as a monster!"

CHAPTER XX.

THIS conversation was broken in upon by a call from Miss Hale. It was one of compliment, both to Mrs. Davenport and her guest; but it was also intended as a propitiatory visit in behalf of the Boltons. Miss Hale openly alluded to the "unfortunate misunderstanding," and professed her anxiety to act as mediator. She said poor Mrs. Bolton had hardly slept since, and was most anxious to bury the whole matter in oblivion. She represented Mrs. Bolton as willing to say any thing that would satisfy Louisa, and had something soothing to say of all the family.

Louisa felt more and more awkward and embarrassed every moment. She tried to set Miss Hale right, according to her view, as to the merits of the affair; but the more she tried, the less Miss Hale's mind seemed capable of embracing her ideas. Miss Hale could not understand—could not even hear; asked for remarks over and over again—took up words, and ran off upon a totally different course. So that poor Louisa began to feel utterly ashamed of her views and her mode of bringing them out; and came to the resolve to acquiesce as far as possible to all Miss Hale's representations, and leave the affair to be settled, as it might be, with the Boltons themselves. She had been annoyed and vexed at Mrs. Bligh sitting by silent over her embroidery frame, enjoying her embarrass-

ment, and laying up store, she was sure, for future raillery. Louisa hoped, however, that in the end of the discourse she had succeeded in leaving the impression on Miss Hale's mind, that a call from Mrs. Bolton and her daughters would be most acceptable. The next day they did call, but all together. There were other visitors in the room, and the visit passed off in a formal or friendly manner. There was no opportunity for any personal conversation, especially on such a subject. Even Helen was unable, from her position in the room, to make the attack she had planned ; and she was a little disarmed by Louisa reminding her at parting that the number of singing lessons were not yet fulfilled, and asking when she might come for that purpose.

"So you mean to continue your lessons," said Mrs. Bligh, after all had departed.

"Oh, yes, indeed you must let me," replied Louisa, rather distressed ; "you must let me manage matters my own way."

"Oh, I have not the least objection," cried Mrs. Bligh, "I rather approve your carrying the war right into the enemy's quarters."

"You know, Clara, I do not like you talking so," said Louisa ; "I do not mean even now to give them up without a trial."—And Louisa did not flinch from the trial she proposed.

The Boltons were all out on Louisa's first call, but near the house she met Helen, who was walking fast homewards. Louisa asked her if she was engaged, with the idea of returning home with her.

"Oh, no, not engaged, I will turn back with you," cried Helen ; "I am only affronted with Frederick

Frampton ; he is such a conceited young man, and takes such liberties !”

“ I thought he was such a favourite with you all,” observed Louisa, hoping this a symptom of improvement.

“ Oh, not with me,” said Helen ; “ don’t you know how we always quarrel ? The rest admire him prodigiously, but I cannot bear him. We always part in enmity.”

“ Then why do you talk so much to him, and think so much of him ?” said Louisa.

“ I think much of him !” cried Helen, offended ; “ that is rather too much ! I hope I have better employment for my thoughts than Mr. Frederick Frampton !”

“ I hope so too,” said Louisa, “ but still you certainly do appear to like your quarrels with him, and encourage him to dispute : that is just the way to make a man more conceited.”

“ But I neither do enjoy our quarrels, nor think him conceited,” said Helen.

“ Why, just now you called him conceited,” returned Louisa.

“ Oh, that I never did !” cried Helen, sharply, “ and if he is conceited, he has a right to be so, for he is a most gentleman-like young man, with a vast deal of mind,—quite a rarity in these parts.”

“ Then, after all, you do agree with the rest of your family in admiring him,” observed Louisa.

“ I would thank you, Louisa, not to insinuate that I admire any young man, or that any young man can be a favourite with me,” cried Helen, piqued.

“ I only meant to apply your words as you applied them

yourself," returned Louisa, in a tone that rather repressed Helen's rude inconsistency.

With more respect, Helen replied, "We all have our faults, and Frederick Frampton is not without his; but, as young men go, he is not one to be scoffed at."

"I would not scoff at him," said Louisa, quietly, "but I cannot say I approve of all he says."

"Oh, no more do I," cried Helen, "I always tell him so, and then we fall to disputing; but he is a young man of very fine talents and sentiments."

"But it is his sentiments I do not like," said Louisa; "and I thought him so inconsistent."

"Stuff and nonsense, Louisa!" cried Helen; "who is there that is not inconsistent? You don't want young men to be Methodists, do you? I am sure I don't, if you do."

"I only want those I admire to think and judge as Christians," replied Louisa.

"You quite provoke one to hear you talk!" cried the other; "do you mean to say that Frederick Frampton is no Christian?"

"I do not say that," returned Louisa; "but there was much passed the other day that I was sorry for, and wished otherwise."

"We all know well enough," cried Helen, sharply, "that there is an old grudge between you and Frederick, and that you are determined to crush him."

"How can you be so absurd, Helen!" cried Louisa, amazed, though almost smiling; "besides, do you not remember he said he had never seen me before?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Helen, "we all know what that meant."

"It was this, especially, that I wished to mention to

you all," said Louisa; "till just before he changed his assertion, I fully believed I never *had* seen him before; but, in spite of all his protestations, I could not help afterwards feeling sure that his first assertion was right, and that I met him one evening, at a race ball, at Ashley. I then thought he still believed it, and now I see you do."

"To be sure I do," said Helen, "but what then?"

"Why, you know how positively he denied it."

"Oh, that was nothing but a piece of fun between us," said Helen; "the fact was, he was afraid of my wit; if he had done otherwise, I should have led him such a life."

"Then, indeed, I do not think you put your wit to very good account, if you make a man tell a direct falsehood."

"Upon my word!" cried Helen, "you are rather free in your charges this morning, Mrs. Davenport; first, you tell me that my friend is no Christian, and next, no gentleman! If we were gentlemen, you would stand a chance of being called out, and a very good thing it would be. People are so free with their tongues, when there is no penalty to pay! For my part, I think it very cowardly to take away the character of a man behind his back."

"But you do not think I do attack his character," said Louisa; "you approve of all he said and did, and think me wrong to find fault."

"Yes, but you want to make me think ill of him," returned Helen, "and I must say, it is most ungenerous conduct. I hope I have spirit enough to stand up for my friends when I hear them attacked."

"I do not like to hear you defend any thing like a want of truth," returned Louisa, "and I do not think I can be wrong to tell you so. I thought I was intimate enough

with you to mention these things ; perhaps if I knew Mr. Frampton as well, I might be able to do the same."

Helen was touched with Louisa's kind manner and good sense, but she put aside the feelings these would have induced, and replied, "Since you set yourself up as a censor, Mrs. Davenport, I think you are flinching from your duty, in not speaking to him himself."

"My object was rather to speak to you, Helen," said Louisa, "though our conversation has taken a turn I did not exactly intend. I did think, from our intimacy, you would allow me to speak, but I am sorry to find it displeases you."

"Nothing displeases me about myself," said Helen, rather perplexed to answer, because she was not speaking from her heart, as Louisa was ; "nothing displeases me about *myself*. Find fault with *me*, if you please, but I will not hear the absent pulled to pieces."

"If then, I may say what has vexed me, I will tell you at once," said Louisa, availing herself, without hesitation, of the permission ; "I regret to see and hear you follow any thing but your own good sense and feeling."

"And what right have you to suppose I do follow any thing but my own good sense and feeling ?" asked Helen.

"To go no further back than this conversation," said Louisa ; "I would say, that when you defend any approach to an untruth, you do so."

"What a fuss you make about this mighty fib !" cried Helen ; "then it seems the grand offence was not given till this moment. I am sure I thought we had been at daggers drawn, more than this week past. People told me so, but I suppose nobody speaks truth now-a-days."

"I do not speak from to-day only, or from last week—"

Louisa began, but was interrupted by Helen exclaiming, "Then why, pray, did you wait till this moment, for representing my wickedness? Oh, fie, Mrs. Censor, why not speak the very first moment?"

Helen forgot, or chose to do so, passages that had before passed between herself and Louisa.

"I see you are not in a mood to believe me in earnest," said Louisa.

"But I do believe you very much in earnest," replied Helen; "I believe you dislike Frederick Frampton, and that the sight of him has driven you from our house. There, now, Mrs. Davenport, I can be as frank and candid as you!"

"Indeed you are quite mistaken," said Louisa; "I confess I regretted to hear you join with Mr. Frampton in some opinions and sentiments, as I now regret to hear you defend what I think quite wrong; but this had nothing to do with Mr. Frampton personally. You have witnessed nearly the whole of our acquaintance."

"Why I know you met several times at Humberdown," said Helen, "and that you disliked him as much there, and were as rude to him as here."

"If I have met him several times, I am quite unconscious of it," returned Louisa; "the only time I can call to mind is the evening I have already alluded to. He asked me to dance, and having already declined several times, I excused myself. I did not even know his name, and scarcely ever remembered the circumstance, till his behaviour in your drawing-room recalled the same person to my mind."

"It is ridiculous for you to deny that you hate Frederick Frampton," said Helen, "and we all know the reason."

Louisa felt perplexed. She could not decide if these strong expressions alluded to more than the disapprobation she was conscious of entertaining of his general manners and temper. Her companion however cut short her hesitation by adding, "You think it was Frederick Frampton who brought all the reports here of your pride and airs before you came."

"Indeed," cried Louisa, colouring high from different causes, "indeed you are mistaken; I never thought they came from any such quarter; and even if it were he, I should be unreasonable to be angry, when I have never suffered from them for one moment. None of you regarded them for a single day."

"Why, no!" cried Helen, "I trust some of us, at any rate, are capable of using our own good sense and feeling, and are not led by the evil example of others.—But here we are!" added she, turning down the lane, at the corner of which stood the Hollies, "will you come in?"

"Are you returning there?" cried Louisa, in surprise, "I thought you were displeased."

"*My* displeasure does not last for ever," replied Helen, pointedly; "I hope I am neither censorious nor unforgiving.—Then you are not coming in?"

Louisa explained that Mrs. Bligh would be expecting her for a drive, and excused herself on this account.

"Then good-bye, Mrs. Davenport!" cried Helen, in a tone between pique and defiance, and the next moment she had opened and closed the garden gate.

In a day or two Mrs. Bligh, who had been prevented accompanying Louisa in this call, proposed returning visits in the village, and among the rest the Boltons. Louisa was glad of a reason for not absenting herself in the pre-

sent state of affairs, and gladly joined her sister. The usual party were in the room, and fell easily into a discourse with Mrs. Bligh, concerning her children, and their several ways and dispositions. Helen disliked children; Eliza adored them. Mrs. Bolton was shocked at her daughter Helen; Mrs. Bligh not at all;—and so the conversation took this turn; while Margaret led Louisa to the window, the better to examine a painting of a friend, one of the Miss Long's, done in oriental tinting."

"Is it not beautiful?" said Margaret; "I do think oriental tinting such a discovery—don't you?"

"I do not like the style," said Louisa; "one reason is, that all the stupidest and idlest girls in our school excelled in it. I thought it such a shame to see them carry off the prizes, while all the clever industrious ones, who worked away at pencil, chalk, and sepia, were quite overlooked."

"Well, that *was* unfair, certainly," said Margaret; "but then drawing is a great waste of time, and is of no use after all the trouble, except to artists. Now this oriental tinting is learned in no time, and requires no talent or study, and I am sure it looks just as well as regular painting."

"Oh, no, indeed!" cried Louisa, regarding the piece with little admiration, "I never can look with pleasure on a piece of oriental tinting."

"Oh, I remember!" said Margaret, "I know why you hate it! I had forgotten it was by a sister of the Miss Long whose conduct you so disapproved the other day."

"I did not know it," said Louisa, "I really had no personal feeling in the matter."

"Oh, you must dislike a whole family, if you dislike one," said Margaret; "and you were so very strong."

Louisa had more hope of Margaret's good sense than her sister's, so without controverting her position she continued, "But now, Margaret, can you yourself deny that the conduct of both these young people was bad—very bad indeed? Has not Alfred Jenappe behaved most abominably, and done what was wrong in itself in a very mean manner?"

"Well, I do not exactly defend him," said Margaret; "I do not say he is all one could wish; but law, my dear, who is?"

"But then it vexes me to hear those I would esteem, tolerate, and even admire, people with such low principles. Why will you do so?"

"It's no business of mine, you know," said Margaret; "it is not even my cousin, or my brother, or sister. What would you have me do?"

"If it were any connexion of yours," returned Louisa, "you would say it was not your place to attack your own relations, and so, you see, by your rule, nobody can begin."

"Well, that is very true, and I say,—who can begin?" replied Margaret; "we are none so mighty good ourselves. If I begin upon others, I know others will begin upon me, and then what can I say? No, my dear, I am older than you, I am near thirty, and I have seen the end of your reformers. My maxim in morals is, 'live and let live.' Depend upon it, we have enough to do if we look at home."

Louisa felt there was some truth in this; but she was not disposed to surrender her point. She therefore continued, "But you would not make friends of unworthy

persons,—would you? You would not like your sisters to marry any one like Mr. Jenappe?”

“I should like men and women to be angels,” cried Margaret, “but that will never be till we get to Heaven; and so I am content to let this world jog on as well as it can, while I get as much comfort from it as I can. Helen gets amusement—I get comfort. As for my sisters, they will marry to please themselves, not to please me; and I shall not interfere with their choice. I certainly do not expect them to get angels for husbands, and yet I shall never break my heart about it. Why should I more than you? *You* do not take family matters so to heart.”

Louisa was a little startled by this home allusion. She thought sisters the same age, living together, were very different from brothers apart, and considerably older, and was going to observe that she had no sisters, when it struck her her own allusion must have been out of place, since Margaret’s seemed to be so, and she was silent.

“Come, come, Louisa,” continued Margaret, “bury all disputes, and let us be friends again. Helen has told me your talk with her. She is sharp and keen, and cannot be calm, like me; so never mind her. Just look round at the world we live in, and tell me, in reason, if we can go on upon your plan! We should quarrel with every body, and be left alone in our glory. This is just the nonsense poor Lucy Grove talks; but she is a child. You have more sense and discretion, and I am sure are too kind, to bring discord into a place that has always been famed for its charity and good understanding. Nobody here ever had a quarrel with Mr. Davenport, and it would be a sad thing that disunion should follow his marriage.”

Louisa thought she had never before felt the full weight

of the trouble she had brought upon herself, till this moment. It seemed to her quite inexplicable how it was she had got into such a tangle. Margaret saw her advantage, and pursued it. "You see," said she, "every body has been watching you, after all the reports that got about of your airs and graces. *We* did not mind them, and have always been fighting your battles, and hard work it has been ! but there are the Hales, and Framptons, and Harries, and all their set ; beside all down at Stockfield, who are ready to believe all that was said ; and if they do, they will make Branstone miserable to you. I know you will not be able to stay. People are so ill-natured."

"If I have done wrong in any thing," replied Louisa, very gravely, "I know I must suffer ; but I will not do farther wrong, for the sake of avoiding inconvenience. I may be made uncomfortable by external circumstances, but not miserable ; that I can only become in the present case, by being insincere."

"I am sorry, very sorry for you," said Margaret ; "for Mr. Davenport's sake, as well as your own, I hope you will think better of it ; you will make every place too hot to hold you, and this is just what people said."

Louisa felt more meek than she was accustomed to do, under half-deserved rebuke. She thought there must be some truth in Margaret's words, and she replied, with a good deal of feeling, "I hope I shall never reject good advice, nor cease to be grateful to those who offer it."

"But I want more than gratitude ; I want your affection and confidence restored," said Margaret.

"Oh, Margaret !" cried Louisa, rather annoyed than moved, for Margaret's manner was more pressing than affectionate ; "you understand the difference there is be-

tween us, as well as I do ; do not then talk as if words meant nothing ; truth is a substance ; without it, neither our characters nor our religion can stand."

" Really, now you are too deep for me," said Margaret ; " I must say it is a new thing to me to be charged with want of truth."

" You know where and how we differ," repeated Louisa, " and that is quite sufficient. Do not let us waste time in mere words."

" For my part, I hate argument," said Margaret ; " no good ever comes of it ; it only seems to make friends foes."

Here a move in the room disturbed the talkers, and spared Louisa the difficulty of either continuing or breaking off the conversation. Soon after the visitors took leave.

" It will not do, Clara," said Louisa, after they had walked a few steps in silence ; " I am too hard and unaccommodating I know, but if the stand is not made now, it is only deferred for some more painful occasion."

" Then you have been speaking on the subject."

" Yes, I have had a more quiet reasonable talk with Margaret than with Helen," returned Louisa, " but I see it will answer no good purpose ; we move in parallel lines, — we never can meet."

" What is it they want exactly ?" asked Mrs. Bligh.

" I did not like to be so great a hypocrite as to enquire," said Louisa ; " though it would have spared me much trouble. I know they want me to go on just as before, and return to my old ways and manners ; I cannot do this with sincerity, except I forget the deficiencies I see and lament, so as to partake them."

" Well, I see you have been more familiar than inti-

mate, and now you feel a reaction, and must be more sincere than kind."

"Yes, it is true it is my own fault, I know it," replied Louisa, "but if I act for the best, according to my character, I hope I shall be helped out,—at any rate so far as not to bring poor Henry into the scrape. I wished so much to avoid the usual cry, that all is changed and goes wrong when a man marries. I always thought nobody should say so in my case, and this was one reason, I set about being so much at ease, with any who seemed friendly."

"There was too much prejudice in you, Louisa," observed her sister.

"Yes, some prejudice, and a little—something between affection and vanity gratified. I was pleased at making my way with strangers so easily, and I liked to give play to the opportunity of making friends with those who had no birth or distinction. To be quite honest, Clara, I know that the deficiencies of manner I perceived early enough, served rather as a recommendation to me than otherwise."

"Yes, I know you wished to prove prejudice against vulgarity, a vulgar prejudice," said Mrs. Bligh.

"And I do not consider that I have disproved that," continued Louisa, "the vulgarity that I have seen here, has been owing to a moral defect, rather than want of refinement and good manners. It is want of truth, justice, and consideration for the feelings of others, that makes their house a Babel, both to the outward senses and inward feelings. There are such bursts of personal feelings which always grate on me more than any thing; except

that which inevitably accompanies them,—the imputation of low motives.”

“Undisciplined personal feeling one may be sure is the mother of vulgarity, because it is only another name for pride,” observed Mrs. Bligh; “and pride in all its thousand forms is what we have most to contend against in forming a character on the model of Christian charity.”

“Pride sounds the worst, and we all willingly agree to it,” said Louisa, “but practically I think selfishness the mother of vulgarity.”

“Selfishness is but a developement of pride,” returned Mrs. Bligh, “and I think you will find that my ‘pride’ includes a wider range of classes under the charge of vulgarity than your ‘selfishness.’ We have many men of refinement and ladies of self-denying practices among us, essentially vulgar.”

“Well, I am glad you do not limit vulgarity to any class,” cried Louisa; “I wish to believe that we, who conceive ourselves a degree more refined than our neighbours, are in as much danger from it as any other persons in the world.”

“You will never find me question that,” said Mrs. Bligh; “it is distinction and success that especially try and bring out the points of pride in a character. Whatever is the means then of attaining these, is dangerous; and I do not suppose you think me likely to deny that the high and the refined are safer from the trial of distinction than those in a lower grade.”

“All I wish is to rescue those from the charge of vulgarity,” observed Louisa, “whose deficiencies do not arise from some moral defect.”

“I am sure I should be the last to repress your zeal,”

returned her sister, with a smile ; “ I should say, go forth and conquer, and return and lay your trophies at my feet.”

“ I do not like your tone, Clara,” said Louisa.

“ I am in earnest—quite in earnest,” said Mrs. Bligh ; “ but,” added she, drily, “ I think I would engage to eat all your specimens.”

“ It is no use talking abstractedly to you, Clara,” said the other. “ Tell me,—do you think old nurse Kettlethwaite vulgar ?”

“ I call nurse Kettlethwaite the greatest lady in and about Chadleigh for many a mile,” said Mrs. Bligh,—“ Lucy Grove always excepted.”

“ Well, I am satisfied now,” returned Louisa, “ if you allow an old nurse of the lowest pedigree to be a gentlewoman ; your principles are respectable at the least.”

They had now reached the school, which Louisa had engaged to superintend in Mrs. Grove’s absence. This lady had left with her family for Brighton, to join her husband, the week before, as has been mentioned ; and this day was the first on which Louisa commenced her visiting.

Mr. Thorp, the young clergyman, had taken possession of the parsonage, and so entire a novice was he in all matters, that he felt thankful to Mrs. Davenport for any assistance and advice ; nor could Louisa bring him to realize that none could be a greater novice than herself.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON the following morning during breakfast at the Close, passing events were discussed.

"Well," cried Helen, "I certainly enjoy a change. Mr. Grove is very good, and all that; but one gets tired of the same face, and the same voice, and the same sermons for ever."

"Yes, but it is not so pleasant to be preached to by one who was the other day a youth here," said Margaret.

—Mr. Thorp had been three months with Mr. Grove as a pupil, on the first settlement of the latter at Chadleigh—

"Oh, what does that signify?" asked her sister, "all men were youths once, and so long as a sermon is a good one, what can it matter who preaches it?"

"Mr. Thorp's sermon was all very well, but was quite the sermon of a young man," observed Margaret.

"All young men preach on affliction," observed her sister; "one would think the young had more to bear than the old."

"Well, and so they have," replied Margaret; "old hearts get hard and callous. I felt once more than I do, but that is past now."

"Come, Margaret," cried Helen, laughing, "pray don't give us a dish of sentimentality. If Emma were down,

perhaps she might condescend to join the conversation, but no one here will respond."

"I am sure I do wish Emma would condescend to be a little more regular," said Margaret, who was tea maker; "I declare I will not keep all the breakfast things as I have lately. It was past eleven before she was down yesterday;" and she rose and rang the bell. "Mamma," continued she, "I do wish you would be as strict as Mrs. Grove for one month, and bring Emma into order."

"And a few besides Emma," cried Helen, laughing; "but I am afraid it would not do now. I think we should be too much for any Mrs. Grove: we must hand ourselves over to some Mrs. Davenport."

"How silly she has made herself!" said Eliza; "for my part, I cannot see what in the world she would be at!"

"Oh, I know very well what she would be at," cried Helen; "she wants us to give up all our friends and connexions, and be at her beck and call. She wishes to be my lady in the place, and have us all afraid of moving or speaking but as she directs."

"She is young, my dears, and not used to her own dignity," said Mrs. Bolton; "there is no young woman whose head could stand such a rise as hers."

"Well, mamma, I think mine could stand it very well indeed," said Helen; "give me an opportunity, and I'll try. I would not cut my husband's friends as Mrs. Davenport is doing. I would be affable and intimate with the whole fry in a minute, if they were ever so disagreeable; and I would continue a sworn friend as long as they had something to give—that is, amusement, or any thing more solid."

"I doubt that very much," said Margaret; "you,

Helen, have quarrelled much more deeply with Louisa than I have."

"To be sure!" cried Helen, "I meant it!—a little impertinent upstart, coming here and thinking to lord it over us all! I hope I gave her ladyship a lesson she will not soon forget. I think it will be some while before she ventures to lecture *me* again."

"Her conduct would be unpardonable if she were older, and knew more of the world," said Margaret; "I confess I had some hope of her before my last talk."

"Hope!" exclaimed Helen, "nonsense and stuff! I soon saw there was nothing to hope about her; all that Fred Frampton said was quite true; though I stood up for her, out of pride, I knew she was as obstinate as a mule before you did."

"You did not seem to do so," said Margaret.

"Oh, *I* should never have quarrelled with her, if she had not with me," returned Helen; "I bore the first attack, about two months ago, and never said a word, though it was enough to provoke a saint."

"And what was it?" asked Margaret.

"She chose to take me to task about our refusing an invitation," replied her sister; "don't you remember she was here, when the Groves sent to ask us to tea one evening? We expected Frederick Frampton might come the evening they had fixed on, so we made up a neat little fib, something about Stephen and his wife, and the hooping-cough, I forget what, but it made a good story, and excused us easily; well, madam took me to task, as if I had done the wickedest thing in the world in writing this note, and I saw, by all she said, what she was made of. Because she is Mrs. Davenport, she thinks she may insult

all the world, and treat them as nothing better than the dust under her feet?"

"Why how does she expect people to get on at all," said Eliza, "if they are so nice as all this comes to?"

"I asked her that," returned Helen, "and she could not reply; she only said, she never would tell an untruth, as she called this, and when I pressed her with questions, she denied ever having done any thing of the sort in her life, which I knew must be a greater fib than what I had just been guilty of."

"Such wonderful sincerity must come to nothing in the end," said Margaret; "if we do not fib, we must tell half the world that we hate them, and the rest, that we wish them at Jericho, except for the benefit we hope to get by them."

"If Mrs. Davenport means to set up a Temple of Truth," said Helen, "she will, in a week, reign in solitary grandeur. Her own husband, I should guess, would be the first to decamp."

"No, I do think he would be the last," said Margaret, laughing; "I do believe she would wish to keep him, and he to stay to the last gasp."

"Nonsense! not she," returned Helen; "she has no heart but for her own pride."

"I don't think quite as bad of her as you—" Margaret began.

"Then you *will*, Margaret," interposed her sister, "you have given up a part of your defence already. I never liked her; it was only to oppose Fred Frampton that I ever took her part; I always like to take down the conceit of young men."

"I do not defend her, or take her part," said Margaret,

as in apology ; " I see she is thoroughly wilful, and bent on her own ways, but I would keep things together a little longer, if I could. I am ashamed of you, Helen, for being so thoughtless ; for the sake of your family, you ought to be able to forget personal affronts ; I would not be mean, but I would be prudent."

" There's a good creature," said Mrs. Bolton, " pray do ! and you, my dear Helen, must indeed learn to curb your temper ; you forget how much your brother may lose, if you give way to your displeasure."

" And you do not know how much he may gain, mamma," returned Helen ; " if Mrs. Davenport quarrels with us and all the neighbourhood, and if Mr. Davenport quarrels with his wife, we shall rise again, and Laurry will carry the day after all."

" A flattering dream, Helen," said Margaret, " but it has not been Mr. Davenport's mode hitherto."

" But men change when they marry," replied Helen ; " I hold that no man was ever disinterested to his life's end ; and as Mr. Davenport has got into the habit of giving away, if he goes on for a time, it must be through spite or pride."

" Well, never mind which," said Margaret, " so as it lasts our time ; but hark ! what is that ? They never practise the bells at this time in the morning."

" What is to-day ?" said Helen ; " no royal birth-day, coronation, or any public festival, is it ?"

" No, nor benefit club or village feast," said Eliza ; " oh, hear how merrily they peal ! Do you think it is Mr. Davenport returned ?"

" No, no, his day is past for this sort of peal. It sounds wonderfully like a wedding," said Margaret.

"Nonsense! Margaret, a wedding!" cried Helen, "how could there be any match or wedding going, and we hear nothing of it?"

As Helen spoke, her brother Laurence burst into the room; "Look! look!" cried he, "run to the window, all of you girls; the grandest, smartest wedding that was ever seen! Bows and favours, and white ribbons, and all the rest of it; be quick, or all will be past."

"Stop! stop, Laurry!" cried Helen, as her brother was running off, "Who is it?"

"I don't know—not I," returned he, hastily, "but don't stop me, I must just run up to tell Emma, for none of you will, I know. Look at the bride!" added he, shouting in, as he scampered past the door, on his descent from his sister's room; "every body says she is lovely," and away he ran, to intercept the carriages by a short cut.

"Who can it be?" said Helen.

"Some of the gentry in the neighbourhood, perhaps," said Eliza.

"How you forget, Eliza," said Helen, "there are only two great houses in the parish, and one old Lady Forbes'."

"Well, but old Lady Forbes often has her granddaughters with her."

"As if they would be married away from their own home!" exclaimed Helen.

"Besides," continued Eliza, "it may be Mr. Baird's eldest daughter. You know every body says she is engaged to Sir Frederic Wylde."

"Did you ever hear of a wedding among the gentry, and we not know?" exclaimed Helen, indignantly; "besides the report is a century old. While you are about

it, you may as well turn the bridegroom into another Frederick."

"Well, and suppose we do," said Margaret; "suppose he and Sophy Harris have knocked up a marriage; he was there twice last week! You know the Harrises love to be sly and close; Sophy would delight in taking us all in."

"And what are they to live upon, pray?" said Helen; "I think Fred Frampton is not such a ninny as to be caught just now."

"And with a plain girl, without a farthing," said Eliza.

"He despises beauty, you know; he always says he never would marry a pretty girl," said Margaret.

"Sophy is not his taste, I will answer for that," returned Helen; "but it is quite silly to waste words on such a ridiculous notion;—the bride lovely too!"

"Oh, all brides are lovely, that is a matter of course," said Margaret; "but time will show."

"I am sure I wish time would show," exclaimed Helen, "for I am tired of waiting, and one can see nothing here. I have been afraid of stirring, but I will now run up to Emma's room; her window is the best in the house; I dare say Laurry is with her after all, he always gets the best of every thing."

"If you want to see any thing you had better come back, Helen, for here are the carriages!" cried Margaret.

Helen was at her place again in an instant, but got only a glimpse. Two handsome carriages, with favours, drove past at a brisk pace.

"How fast they went; but I got a glimpse of the

bride!" said Margaret, "she certainly seemed pretty, and beautifully drest."

"She had a blond fall," said Eliza; "I think it was real."

"That stupid wall, how I detest it!" cried Helen, "I do wish, mamma, you would have it down, one can see nothing. Cannot you guess at all who it can be, Margaret?"

"Not from the glimpse I had," said Margaret, "people look so different well-drest, and set up in a carriage; but I should say it was somebody prettier and more fashionable than any body here. The bride had her hair in long ringlets."

"The bridegroom was tall," said Eliza.

"All men look tall in a carriage," replied Helen; "but I don't think it was their own carriage; I am sure it was not,—I am sure it was hired."

"They were both very stylish dashing set-outs," said Margaret; "much more so than ours at either Stephen's or Elizabeth's wedding."

"Then our next shall be as good," said Helen, "be it whom it may. I have no notion of being surpassed by people who belong to nobody, and come from we know not where."

There was a little movement in the room during these last remarks. Mrs. Bolton had returned to her seat; her daughters were still at the window, looking out. They turned their heads at the rustling sound they heard, and at an exclamation from their mother. The door was thrown wide open, and two figures had just entered hand in hand, and were on the point of kneeling down before Mrs. Bolton. Their backs were to the sisters, but there

could be no doubt the lady was any other but the bride. She was splendidly attired in white satin and blond, and her fair long ringlets lay on her mother's lap as she knelt.

"Emma!" cried Mrs. Bolton.

"Frederick Frampton!" exclaimed Helen. "Is it possible?—what have you been about?"

"Bless your children, dear madam," said Frederick.

"Forgive—pardon, sweet mamma," cried Emma, with beaming eyes.

"Go, go—you will kill me," said Mrs. Bolton; "how can I forgive?—what can you do?—where—how can you live?"

"Forgive, dear madam, bless your children," reiterated Mr. Frampton, "we rise not till you pardon;" and Emma kissed her mother's hand.

Mrs. Bolton made some incoherent exclamations, and sobbing and weeping, fell fainting upon her other daughters. Thus the group continued for a considerable space, while the maids flew about for restoratives, and the pair of culprits remained kneeling as statues.

"Speak the word, dear lady," said Mr. Frampton, "we shall not know a moment's peace till you say, Arise."

"We are your dutiful and affectionate children, dear mamma," said the daughter; "our only grief has been the thought of vexing you. This has kept me from sleep, and this will bring me to the grave, if you show no pity."

The bridegroom joined in, and poor Mrs. Bolton was of too yielding a nature to resist such appeals. In five minutes the tears were dried, smiles took their place, and all went merry as a bridal day. A large bride-cake was brought in from the carriage; gloves and favours were distributed in abundance; the cake was cut, and the table

covered as by magic with bridal cards, silver ribbons, and little baskets full of charmed pellets of bride-cake for the favoured few. The bride was full of delighted contentment,—her mother of tearful smiles,—Margaret of cheerfulness,—Helen of jests,—Eliza of laughter,—and all of words. In the midst of all the happy couple stepped again into their carriage for a wedding tour—nobody knew where, and nobody knew for how long.

It seems a singular circumstance that those who are weak or silly, or of that sort of character which is usually described by “no character at all ;” who are as unstable as water, and as transient in impression as the light sand in the burning desert ; can follow, promote, and sometimes originate the most daring and complicated schemes for mischief. This was the case with Esther Frampton. Without her assistance and active co-operation, her brother could never have carried through his plans and brought them to a successful termination. Every thing seemed to conspire to facilitate their task ; and the absence of Mr. Grove, with the substitution of a stranger new and young in office, was an unexpected event in their favour, and hastened them on to the catastrophe.

Mr. Frederick Frampton was one of those people who believe themselves endowed with a power of seeing into the mainsprings of action of every human being, and he believed himself consequently intimately acquainted with the character of each individual of the Bolton family. On this belief he had acted, and in accordance with this knowledge he had calculated on subduing his intended mother-in-law in less than half an hour after his marriage. In the same proportion he counted on pacifying the rest of the family, and we cannot say his calculations were ill made. Esther’s

fears lay all in this quarter ; but they did not amount to much. She sat in the second carriage at the gate, awaiting the result of the ingress of the bride and bridegroom, and speculating over the events that were taking place within doors, with Sophy Harris, the other bridesmaid, whose spirits were nothing subdued or diminished. When the cake was sent for, Esther considered the whole affair triumphantly concluded. That, indeed, was the signal for her to drive forwards to her aunt's. "Now all is right," exclaimed she to her companion, as the carriage started, "I am not a bit afraid of aunt Hale : I shall carry news of Mrs. Bolton's entire approbation, and then Aunt will not say a word."

"I am not so faint-hearted," cried Sophy Harris ; "I would dare the displeasure of any body to serve a friend."

These principles look bad enough set down on paper ; but unhappily they are the principles of many young people who associate much together. Perhaps they think if they err, it is only from a superfluity of good nature : they only undertake a service of difficulty generously to oblige others ; but they forget the deceit, the disobedience, the heartless ingratitude to kind and affectionate parents, that they countenance, and in the sin of which they so deeply and inevitably partake. It may be said even that abettors in such proceedings are worse than the parties themselves, on the principle contained in the intimation in the scripture words, concerning those who not only do evil things, but have pleasure in those who do them.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOUISA and her sister were walking in the grounds after breakfast this morning, intending presently to go down to nurse Kettlethwaite, and see how she was.

"It is rather too early for them, Louisa," said Mrs. Bligh; "it puts the tidy folks out so much if we come in and find them all in a 'caddle.'"

"I had a talk once with Mrs. Grove about such matters," said Louisa; "I liked so much all she said, and thought it very sensible. I do not like people to march into cottages at all hours and seasons, only just because those who live in them are poor. As it is, I think we have a great deal too free an access to that class. Their houses ought to be their castles, as much as ours."

"I dare say I should only repeat Mrs. Grove's wise sayings," returned Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "for I mean to be as sensible as herself in such particulars."

"Ah, Clara," said Louisa, "I wish she were as pleasant as she is sensible and good. If she were but a little more like you, I should feel much happier."

"Pray do not wish such a wild unmethodical creature as I at the head of serious affairs in Chadleigh!" cried Mrs. Bligh. "Take *me* all in all, and I should do miserably: take *her* all in all, she does admirably."

"That is true—I mean as far as regards Mrs. Grove,"

said Louisa, correcting herself ; “ but I am afraid I never can really like her. I pretend to like her, and that is all.”

“ Well, Louisa, you must learn to strike a balance between worth and agreeableness. As you grow older, you will find the first will gain in weight and value.”

“ But then, Clara, I will not give up the union of the two,” said Louisa ; “ nothing vexes me so much as to see good people as heavy and dull as lead. I feel ashamed of their being good, or of their being allowed to be at large as specimens to the world.”

“ It depends on the sort of heaviness you deplore,” said Mrs. Bligh ; “ some heaviness may be of a very respectable quality, and have more worth than weight in it ; and that I consider is the case with Mrs. Grove.”

“ Oh, Clara,” cried Louisa, “ but indeed she is not kind or pleasant sometimes ! I do not mean to say her defects amount to what we were discussing the other day ; but she is not considerate of the feelings of others. She is cool, and makes remarks that quite grate upon the ear and feelings. I often think, ‘ How can a lady say such a thing ! ’ ”

“ Well, I do not deny that there is truth in what you say,” replied Mrs. Bligh. “ Mrs. Grove does not exactly come up to one’s notion of a lady. If she were not a person of birth, the defect would be set down to that. She certainly wants a quality you utterly despise and renounce.”

“ What do you mean, Clara ? ” said Louisa,—“ what quality ? ”

“ I mean politeness.”

“ Why politeness, Clara ? ” asked Louisa ; “ it is a frightful word ;—why not kindness ? ”

"Because it is not kindness that Mrs. Grove wants. Politeness is the exact word, and nothing else."

"Gentleness will do,—why not gentleness?" again asked Louisa.

"No! politeness is my word," returned Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "and a very good word it is. I see no harm in it at all, nor any reason why it should be consigned to the borders of deceit. It is just what is required—a certain softness of expression, or even merely of manner or inflexion—a something that is fitted to do justice to the sentiments and feelings of the mind of one intrinsically kind and good. I know no other word but politeness that so nearly expresses this quality."

"But I cannot bear the word," said Louisa, "it is so connected with the idea of form and fuss."

"And in my mind it is quite separated," returned Mrs. Bligh; "the preciseness you complain so much of in Mrs. Grove, arises from her methodical conscientious qualities: if she possessed the softness I speak of, these would accommodate themselves more agreeably to the varied circumstances and characters that constantly surround her. She has attained formality, but not politeness."

"Well, I understand your meaning," said Louisa, "and I do not want to dispute about a word. We pretty well agree, but I should go farther for the want. I feel an absence of poetry; I mean of a poetical view of things: she strives to shut one up in so narrow a compass, and I think I see it in her management of her family. Do you not perceive how even the daughters fly to their father for sympathy, in minor matters. How different he is! So as he is," added she, smiling, "in his principles and views, he is delightful, quite delightful, in his family. Be

sides, he is not entirely perfect ; he is not free from blunders and mistakes, which are an unspeakable relief in good people."

"Mrs. Grove's early youth was a clouded one," said Mrs. Bligh ; "she had an unloving father and a stern mother, and she had no gentler sister or brother, or immediate friend, on whom to exercise affection. She thus quite missed the tone of feeling, early domestic affection is calculated to impart ; and, added to this, she had a hard task to act in her family, according to her conscientious notions. This gave a staidness to her manners and her feelings, which no subsequent happier circumstances of life have ever overcome."

"Yes, I know she has no playfulness of character," said Louisa ; "I have seen it over and over again in her behaviour to her children, but it makes it a very different thing if one knows all you have been telling me."

"I do not mean to say there is not also natural temper that pre-disposes to this sort of character," returned Mrs. Bligh ; "I have often thought how remarkable it is to see two such characters as herself and her mother, of the same framework, precisely, one might say ; the one in the main humble and excellent, the other certainly very opposite. The one is precise, formal, and a little fidgetty, where the other is harsh, haughty, and overbearing ; the one is serious, and unmoved by external circumstances, where the other is vehement and determined, even to turbulence. One may lose smiles, but one is spared misery."

"Dreadful !" cried Louisa, as she called to mind her own happier lot. "Poor Mrs. Grove ! how could she subdue feelings such as hers must have been !"

"This is indeed the best way of looking upon it," ob-

served Mrs. Bligh ; “ *we* ought not to think how much more agreeable she might be ; that should be her business. *We* ought to wonder she is what she is.”

“ That is quite true,—I feel it entirely, Clara,” said Louisa ; “ still it does not make an unloveable character loveable ; and however I school myself into wonder and admiration, I shall fall back to my old feelings the next time I am in company with Mrs. Grove.”

“ You will learn to value her more,” returned Mrs. Bligh, “ and not being prejudiced, you will forget the wants you now feel. There is one circumstance in her case, which is of unspeakable importance, and which will do more for you than any thing besides, and that is, that however odd or abrupt she may be, however crookedly she chooses her times and seasons for doing and saying things, she is perfectly harmless and stingless, she has no crabbed tempers, no inferior motives, nor perverse designs.”

“ That is a great satisfaction,” said Louisa, “ and is just what one wants to be assured of, in one of Mrs. Grove’s manner ; still, Clara, you cannot deny she is prejudiced,—now can you ?”

“ Well, a little prejudiced sometimes, but still candid ; she loves truth, for its own sake, and so cannot be deeply prejudiced. One more quality she has, which is, a very low estimation of her powers of agreeableness. She sincerely thinks herself a person irremediably unprepossessing,—manners and appearance—and this explains much that often seems very queer and unaccountable about her ways.”

“ If it is so,” said Louisa, “ it is really too bad altogether. I could be angry with her for such misplaced

humility, and with myself, for ever having perceived there was the least defect. Believing what you say, I could at this moment set about declaring her the pleasantest person I know, and that quite sincerely."

"Well, let this happy frame last awhile, and all will do very well," said Mrs. Bligh, smiling.

"I am in good hope about it," returned Louisa. "In the first place, I have said my say, and that is a great comfort to me always. In the next, you are so affable and kind—not like that perverse Henry;—you sympathize with my feelings and position exactly, and do not deny that there is truth in my complaint. Now the only word that tiresome Henry would ever say against poor Mrs. Grove, was in answer to some remark of mine. He just asked, 'Did you ever hear me say that Mrs. Grove was perfection?'"

Mrs. Bligh laughed merrily at both brother and sister. "Yes," said she, "that is just like both of you. If Henry would just have said, 'Mrs. Grove is cold and odd, and will treat you like a child if you deserve it; she is not always quite agreeable,' you would have been satisfied."

"Completely," said Louisa, "and I should never have made a complaint. I do not say I should have taken less to Mrs. Bolton, but I am sure I should have been more ready to take to Mrs. Grove."

"But you must remember that is not Henry's way," returned the sister.

"Well, I do think if he had not a sister like you, Clara, we should quarrel in six months."

"Then I must say that Mrs. Grove, or any body, would have been fully justified in exerting their prejudices without limit."

"What! against such a bride?" asked Louisa, smiling. "Well, you and Alice shall rescue the victim of prejudice."

"Hark!" cried Mrs. Bligh, arresting her steps for an instant, "what can that be, Louisa?"

"What can that be?" asked the other, looking surprised; "what do you mean?—I hear nothing."

"Nothing! my dear Louisa," cried Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "do not you hear the bells?"

"The bells!—Oh, I did not observe them," replied Louisa; "do you always ask what the bells ring for?—some vestry or churchwardens' meeting, I suppose."

"My dear Louisa," cried Mrs. Bligh, laughing, "you forget where you are! I should have thought three months at Branstone would have better initiated you into village modes. Pray where are the vestry and churchwardens of Chadleigh?"

"Well, I was forgetting, I suppose, and too vexed with the interruption of interesting talk, to care for the bells. But really I do not know what they ring for. They rang the evening we came home. Henry would not countermand them; but I think them always a nuisance, if one knows where the sound comes from."

"Well, nuisance or not, they mean something this morning, and something extraordinary," said Mrs. Bligh; "a wedding, without doubt."

"Well, and suppose it is," said Louisa, "it is nothing to us. If it were any body we are interested in, we should have been prepared."

"I don't know that at all," returned Mrs. Bligh; "what do you say to a marriage between Mr. Frederick Frampton and Miss Helen Bolton?"

"Oh, impossible!" cried Louisa, with sudden animation and interest.

"And pray why impossible?" asked her sister.

"Because it must have been done secretly. From what I know of the Boltons, they would never keep such a thing snug till the very moment. Do you think they would?"

"No, certainly not; but still, why impossible?" continued Mrs. Bligh.

"Why, I do not know—I believe I hope better of Helen than a clandestine marriage," replied Louisa, hesitating; "certainly she has no objection to flirt; but I do not think she is inclined to marry a man for love and nothing else, which would be the case here. They say he is totally unprovided for."

"Worse than that," returned Mrs. Bligh; "but step up here. See! there are two gay carriages with favours dashing along. It is clear now it is a wedding."

At this moment Mrs. Bligh's children came running up full of news. "Oh, mamma," cried little James, "we have seen such a grand sight! I have heard of a wedding, but never saw it before. And there was a bride,—so beautiful! all in white, and several gentlemen and ladies standing about."

However James could give no satisfaction as to the parties, but said that nurse knew all about it. The nurse's account was, that it was one of the young ladies at the Close, married to a gentleman whose name she did not know, but whom she had seen about fishing almost every day in a shooting coat. She said it was so sudden that nobody was in the church, but that she heard that Mrs. Bolton would have taken on too much if she had come, so

that she was persuaded to keep away ; but that Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Bolton and some of the young ladies were there.

"It is a most extraordinary affair," said Mrs. Bligh, as they walked onwards, "but I feel sure we have not got the whole story. Weak as Mrs. Bolton is, she would not,—indeed she could not—have consented to this match, without a good deal of fuss, and we must have heard of it,—she would wish that we should. I think it most likely that your idea is the true one,—that they have married first, and asked leave afterwards."

"And I do not fancy that Helen would do so in this case," said Louisa ; "I think I shall never trust to my impression of character if it is so."

"Helen knows well enough the value of all things," said Mrs. Bligh, "but I fear I have not good opinion enough of her to be sure she would act upon this knowledge. It is painful to think that any young woman can be satisfied with such a man as young Frampton. He has been the plague of his family for years ; has ruined himself two or three times over, and is now sent to his aunt's, to be out of harm's way for a time. I believe his misconduct cannot well be exaggerated."

"But do you think the Boltons know all this ?" asked Louisa.

"I should be surprised if they did not, for it was Miss Hale herself told it me all, not half a year ago ; and she is not of so uncommunicative a nature as to hush up affairs of this sort to any one, least of all to the Boltons ; however one would have thought his manners, and his neglect of all external religious duties, would have been sufficient to warn well-disposed persons against intimacy."

"That is meant for one of my remarks," said Louisa; "and I cannot deny the truth of it; but I certainly do feel how society—and that, I suppose, means the world—modifies one's abstract principles, and makes one frame apologies and excuses of all sorts, for the conduct of those whom one has received as intimates."

"If so, I suppose we should be very careful what characters we choose to make friends of, or regard as intimates," observed Mrs. Bligh.

"But it is much the same with mere acquaintances, if one comes into close contact with them. It is very painful to blame them for all they do."

"I cannot help thinking these remarks and feelings owe their origin to the Bolton family," said Mrs. Bligh, smiling; "I cannot quite fancy Louisa Robinson feeling and expressing the same sort of pain on the conduct of Lady Fowler or Miss Amelia Forster."

"Well," cried Louisa, colouring a little, "perhaps you are right, and I ought not to reject the discovery that my feelings have been *really* a good deal interested in the Boltons. It shows, at any rate, that I have been sincere; but it also shows me, that I will submit to any thing,—to hard names and hard thoughts,—to hard charges, with or without foundation—rather than patch up matters, and let things be as before. It is more dangerous, willingly to mingle with those of inferior principle, than to handle Damascene blades, or play with poisoned arrows."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ESTHER FRAMPTON executed her part in the affair to the satisfaction of those nearest concerned. The sending for the cake from the carriage was to be the signal of reconciliation, and she immediately drove to her aunt's, to impart the news of the morning. Miss Hale was filled with inexpressible amaze, and could show it only by pouring forth a multitude of enquiries, as to how the affair was managed. How Frederick ever came to think of Emma! how he got the license! how they managed to order carriages, dresses, bride-cake, cards, gloves, &c. &c. ! and how Esther contrived to slip out after breakfast, without any body suspecting what they were all about! After this, Miss Hale's thoughts took a different turn; she thought of Frederick's parents and family, and feared they might blame her for the step her nephew had taken. Full of the morning's adventure, and excited by the past and the future, she put on her bonnet and went down to the Close. All the young ladies were out, talking over the news with their acquaintances in the village. Mrs. Bolster was at home, looking and feeling somewhat lonely.

"Well, only think, my dear," said Miss Hale, as she entered, "these young folks have played us a fine trick. Who could have thought it? And Emma too; nobody thought of Emma. What does Helen say to it?"

"Helen is not hurt—not hurt at all," said Mrs. Bolton ; "she loves her dear sister too well to feel any thing but pleasure. She was laughing, and quizzing them to the moment they drove off."

"Ah, she is a wild girl," said Miss Hale, "but I believe the day is past for young ladies to die of love, and a very good thing too ! I am glad to find you are satisfied ; Esther told me that the first thing, which was a great comfort to me to hear ; it quite regulated my feelings ; for you know me well enough, my dear, to be sure I would not open my door to my nephew, dear as he is to me, if you took the thing to heart."

"Why there is no use in doing that," said Mrs. Bolton, "I found the step was taken, and there was an end of it ; better take it quietly, and hope for the best, than make an ado, and set every body against them."

"Very true," said Miss Hale ; "sensible and forgiving, as you always are. I shall write to my sister, and tell her all about it, and what your feelings are. I know she has such a respect for you and yours, that she will be delighted in the connexion, if we can but see any thing of a prospect for the young couple. How are they to live?"

"Oh, they will do," said Mrs. Bolton, avoiding an uncomfortable subject, "they will do very well, I do not doubt. All my children, I am thankful to say, have done very well hitherto."

"Well, that is true enough," said Miss Hale, "whatever misfortunes they have had, they rise above them in no time."

"And what I prize more," said Mrs. Bolton, "is their affection for me through all. Poor dear Emma expressed herself so prettily about it, this morning."

After a good deal more discussion on the subject had passed, the Miss Boltons came in.

"Well, girls," cried Miss Hale, "this is rather too bad! A tolerable manager—Emma—I must say, to get the start of you all, and make you dance without shoes. Well, I am sure I heartily wish you all the same good luck," and she shook the hand of each in congratulation.

"A little better luck for me, please," said Helen, "while you are wishing. I confess I had rather dance without shoes figuratively, than walk without shoes literally, and that must be Emma's case, when she has danced hers out at the toes, during the honey-moon."

"Ah, my lady Disdain, as poor Fred used to call you," cried Miss Hale, "your pride will be brought down some day; we shall see you pine, before long, for love in a cottage."

"Not I," said Helen, "I have no taste for love and starvation."

"Think of poor Emma, and do not defy love," said Miss Hale.

"I hope Emma's sister has more sense than Emma's self," replied Helen.

Margaret gave her sister a reproving look, and Miss Hale continued, "To be sure, the sly girl, how she took us all in! and how well she contrived it,—just managed to be of age. I am sure I never thought of such a thing the other day, when we kept her birth-day, and told her she was come to years of discretion. 'Ah,' said Sophy Harris, 'now you can marry without asking any body.' That Sophy is a bold girl though; I am sure I am glad she is not my niece. Esther has acted with much more discretion; she says she helped them, because if she had

not, they would have been off to Gretna, and that would have distressed you and your dear mamma so much more, —besides the great expense ;—so considerate and prudent of her ; was it not ?”

Of course it was not long before the true state of the case reached Louisa ; and it made a change in her views on the subject. She decided to form no judgment till she had seen and discoursed with Mrs. Bolton, and upon that conversation she was resolved to form her future conduct.

Her husband had taken the opportunity of his sister's presence at Branstone, and his own passage through London from Brighton, to pass a day or two there upon his periodical business visit, after he had arranged all Alice's affairs. He had therefore not returned before these new events occurred, and Mrs. Bligh secretly rejoiced that Louisa could act without implicating her brother in any proceedings.

Louisa, then, called on the Boltons as soon as seemed proper after the ambiguous event that had taken place. Louisa herself had not the slightest idea how Emma's conduct would be regarded by her family. She knew Mrs. Bolton would not be severe eventually ; but from the frankness of the whole party, she expected poor Emma would be severely handled, and prepared to take her part.

“ Well, dear Mrs. Davenport,” cried Mrs. Bolton, rising as her visitor entered, and affectionately greeting her ; “ it is very kind of you to come so soon to congratulate us. We knew our dear Emma had your good wishes, but I like to have them from you in person.”

Louisa was a little thrown back. “ The event took me by surprise,” said she ; “ surely it did you the same ?”

"Yes, certainly," replied Mrs. Bolton, smiling a benevolent apology; "the young people were in greater haste than old ones might think quite prudent. But you, my dear, who have so lately gone through the same experience, can sympathize with them better than any body."

"They may confidently look to you, Louisa, and Mrs. Grove for sympathy," observed Margaret, in an off-hand manner, "if to nobody else in the wide world."

Louisa shrunk at her own case being made public discussion, and the more so from the memory of the very opposite argument it was made to serve, in that very room, the last time it was brought forward, not so very long ago. She was equally indignant at Mrs. Grove's example being adduced as a parallel to the matter now before them. Yet she feared the depth of rudeness which the slightest remark on her part might involve. "Better be rude than allow such self-deception," thought she; "one must be rude to rude people. This is my own seeking, and thus I must pay for my fault." So without farther hesitation, she said simply, "But there was neither secrecy nor imprudence in that match."

"That is as people think," said Margaret; "many think there was a great deal of imprudence."

"And as to secrecy," said Helen, "if that is meant as a slap at Emma, I say it has missed; for Emma did all in the face of the whole world. There was no secrecy or deceit in the matter."

"If you are not going to give Helen her lesson this morning, my dear," said Mrs. Bolton to Louisa, "I wish you would come and look at my fuschias; they are in perfection just now."

"Oh, mamma," cried Helen, "Mrs. Davenport hates

gardens and gardening ; how can you tease her with such things ?”

“ She is too kind to hate any thing belonging to me, I know that,” said Mrs. Bolton to Louisa, with a sweet smile, as they passed into the garden. “ My girls have such spirits,” continued she, “ you must not mind what they say just now ; and I am sure you will not take amiss their fear and jealousy lest their dear sister should be blamed. It has got abroad that you were highly displeased ; and though I assured them of the kindness of your heart, they cannot be satisfied. My children have such an ardent affection for one another.—Now, look ! this is one of my fuschias ; it is a seedling. There, you must wear that branch in your beautiful hair to-night, for my sake. I only wish it was orange bloom, for the sake of those now far off ; but *you* can supply that if you are so condescending.”

“ I am sure I would most willingly, if it would make every thing just what we wish,” said Louisa.

“ Ah, my dear,” replied Mrs. Bolton, “ that is just like your dear enthusiastic spirit. I wish it *were* all just as we could wish, but that is never to be. We must not look for perfection in this world.”

“ Then you are not quite satisfied,” observed Louisa.

“ I do not mind confessing as much to you, my dear,” said Mrs. Bolton ; “ I could scarce do so before those warm-hearted girls of mine. Poor Emma has been hasty. She is ignorant of the world, and has acted accordingly. We must not be severe ;—she has married for love. We must remember we should not be so very angry with her, if she had married an old man for money. Parents in

general never regard such things in this light, but I make allowances."

Louisa was perplexed at the wide field of discussion these remarks opened. She replied however, "It does not make them right, because one or both might have been worse. I cannot but think it heartless in both of them to occasion their two families the difficulties they must for years,—perhaps for life."

"Very true—as indeed all you say always is," said Mr Bolton; "still we cannot put old heads on young shoulders: if we think to do so, we shall be disappointed every day of our lives. But I do not think so badly of the prospects as you seem to do. He is a clever young man and Stephen has got a promising farm in his eye for him. We only want a little money to set them off. All the girls have a pretty little fortune waiting for them till they marry, and though Emma's is less than the others', for her marrying so early, yet it will do something. Till we must pinch ourselves at home for a year or two to help them. It is but sending off a servant or two, or lay down our little carriage."

"I am sure they ought not to allow that," said Louisa.

"Ah, my dear," returned Mrs. Bolton, smiling, "we are so used to luxuries, that you think the loss of such things a great hardship; but to us poor people, I can assure you it is a mere nothing. We are used to do such things. We should have done the same on Elizabeth's marriage—for her outfit was very expensive—had it not been for dear Mr. Davenport's handsome present. Elizabeth was better circumstanced than poor Emma. We must think more of furniture and useful things for her, than of setting her off handsomely."

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upon her, as was done in Elizabeth's case. Poor dear Emma will have many hardships to encounter ; I am sure we need not be too severe with her. This present moment is the only easy time of her life ; when she comes to settle down, she will have nothing but privations."

"I am afraid so," returned Louisa ; "but I should not think so much of that, if every thing else was right, and if you could feel satisfied."

"But I am sure you would think a great deal of it," returned Mrs. Bolton, "if you saw poor Emma in distress and suffering. But that is nothing to the purpose: I wanted a few words alone with you, to say, I hoped you would think no more of any rudeness on the part of poor Fred. Now that he is my son, I feel quite anxious about it. Like poor dear Emma, it has kept me awake all night. I do not know the truth, but they say you and he had an unfortunate misunderstanding before you came here ; and I am afraid this circumstance may operate against my poor Emma. At least, *I* do not think you so unforgiving, but other people declare so, in spite of all I say."

Louisa was vexed and embarrassed on all sides. She felt ashamed of herself, and ashamed of being ashamed of Mrs. Bolton ; and with these feelings tenfold increased, in some excitement, she made her offer of taking upon herself the charge of Laurence's education at college. After the words had passed her lips, she became nervously alarmed. She felt as if she had done the most desperate and unpardonable act in the world. She thought she had offered a positive insult, and that she would receive what she deserved—a burst of indignation. She did receive a burst, but not of indignation. Poor Mrs. Bolton was overcome with wonder and gratitude, and in expressing

the depth of her feelings at the forgiveness, condescension, and delicacy of Louisa's conduct, she melted into tears. Every word was a stab of one kind or other to Louisa ; and as soon as she could, she slipped away and escaped the back way through the kitchen garden, without encountering the inmates within the house. " Clara said," thought she, " she hoped I should never be able to reflect with satisfaction on the disposition of this money. My beginning certainly has been in accordance with her wish." When she came in, Mrs. Bligh asked some question about the school.

" The school !" cried Louisa, " I quite forgot ! I actually have not been there !"

" Where have you been ? What have you been about, Louisa ?" cried Mrs. Bligh, in her merry tones ; " you look like a wild creature !"

" Don't ask me any questions, Clara," said Louisa ; " don't look at me ; I have been doing the most insulting deed, in the most insulting manner. I feel as if I could never hold up my head again, and that all the world must feel the same, when they look at me."

" Except those who will hold their heads all the higher. What you lose, others will gain. Ah !" said Mrs. Bligh, looking in her sister's face, " I suppose I may conclude that Master Laurry is your hopeful *protégé*."

" Just so," said Louisa, " only pray ask me no questions."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOUISA had had latterly a favourite scheme in her head. There was a pretty cottage almost within the park walls ; it was uninhabited, and in a poor condition, but Louisa had always fixed her fancy upon it, and longed to take up her abode there. Next to, or perhaps really before, the idea of occupying it herself, she enjoyed that of fitting it up for Alice, if Alice could be induced to make Chadleigh her home. Why not ? True, Alice was very young for a housekeeper, but what was to be done ? She had not a single elder relation in the world, with whom she might consort. Surely it was better to be near Branstone, than alone among strangers. Alice, she knew, would not consent to taking up her abode at Branstone ; and next to that, what plan could be more promising than the one proposed ? Yet she had her fears, lest her idea was altogether visionary, and great was her delight when Alice wrote, to meet her wishes half way, consenting to accompany the Groves on their return from Brighton, and pay Louisa the visit she desired, during which they could talk and think over the cottage plan. Louisa considered this a consent to the whole, and forthwith set off to examine the cottage more minutely, and give orders for its being put into habitable order.

It was about three weeks after the events last recorded,

that the following conversation took place, in the drawing-room at Branstone. Since then, the party had been completed ; first, by the return of Mr. Davenport, and subsequently, by the arrival of Mr. Bligh, who was shortly to carry home his wife and children. As it happened, he was not in the room at this moment.

"Well, Louisa," said Mr. Davenport, "your *protégé* has passed his first day in college. I dare say he feels as grand and independent as his patroness."

"Do not laugh at me, Henry," replied his wife ; "I expect nothing but mortification, and should be spared severity."

"Very humble, I allow," returned Mr. Davenport, "but I must think it was worth a second thought, if you expect nothing but mortification."

"Just hear him, Clara !" cried Louisa, with an appealing look and action, to her sister ; "this man ! who would empty his coffers, rather than look a person in the face, and say No."

"Well, you must confess he has nobly resisted this last attack," observed Mrs. Bligh.

"You are always benignant, Clara," replied Mr. Davenport, "but I confess I do not deserve your commendation this time. It was no effort to my benevolence to turn a deaf ear to the expectations of a mamma, while defending a daughter who had taken such a step. However pretty the young lady may be, I have a hard heart in such a case ; and I do not know whether the coolness of all the contrivances so long beforehand, was not worse than a regular runaway match. At any rate, it is more provoking."

"We will not say which is worst," observed Mrs.

Bligh ; " Louisa, you do not know what has made Henry suddenly so very fierce and savage."

Louisa professed her ignorance.

" He went this morning to Mrs. Bolton's, primed with an argument to annihilate all her pleas, in favour of her daughter's conduct. This was nothing more or less than the simple example of the Groves' match formerly, which was to stand up before Mrs. Bolton, as a type of a love match, containing precisely the prudent degree of imprudence,—neither too much nor too little. Well, before he could open his battery, Mrs. Bolton most adroitly possessed herself of his cherished weapons, and had made the very same example a plea for Mr. Davenport's countenance and protection towards her dear children. The more he attempted to point out differences, the more she sweetly resisted his inferences ; and the defeated gentleman was obliged to retreat, with less honour than the King of France, who at any rate had the satisfaction of descending the hill not without his twenty thousand men in the rear."

" Well, I confess," observed Mr. Davenport, smiling, " my defeat by word of mouth fixed and strengthened my determination to do nothing—nothing at all—by deed for these young people. Perhaps if I had had my say, I should have thought it but fair to be made pay for it ; but if the mamma is so thoroughly satisfied, it seems just to leave them to help themselves."

" But you know—really—Mrs. Bolton is not so entirely satisfied," said Louisa.

" Then, my dear Louisa, she shall this time pay for the pleasure of her little mystifications."

"Indeed," cried Louisa, "I did not intend my remark to make you change your determination."

"And now for *Mrs. Davenport's* side of the question," cried Clara, laughing archly. "Pray, Henry, do you know why Louisa has become suddenly so very fierce and savage?.....Then I will tell you. It is the last grain of sand that makes the heap,—and so it is here. As soon as this pet cottage of Alice's is put to rights, the garden made a sham paradise by flower pots and boughs stuck in here and there from the Hall—(you know poor dear Louisa despises gardening)—as soon as the house itself is all tidied up—complete within—complete without—with the same sort of furniture from the Hall to tempt poor Alice's imagination, and make-believe to us all that the appointments throughout are perfection ;—just as the lady of the magic change is surveying and rejoicing in the work of her hands—comes down Mrs. Bolton, and after due admiration at the transformation, and the taste and judgment displayed, out slips an aspiration, 'Oh, that dear Emma could meet with just such a place, till Frederick was fixed in a farm! Oh, that there were such another cottage in Chadleigh! How delightful it would be to have dear Emma so near them! Poor dear! she was so unused to housekeeping, that she would quite ruin them all without some experienced person to direct and advise!' The next step was a suggestion that if Miss Sidney found any objection to the sweet cottage, Fred and Emma would willingly inhabit it. It would be a thousand pities that a place so completely fitted up, should go to ruin again for want of being occupied. Next day came one more proposal, which Mrs. Bolton was delicate enough to convey

through the intervention of Miss Hale and myself. Miss Hale entered a good deal into speculations concerning Miss Sidney's circumstances and means,—remarked that it was said she was not left very well off—that she was very young to keep house for herself,—and wished that there was some agreeable and suitable family in Chadleigh where such a young lady might take up her abode. How much pleasanter that would be to Miss Sidney than living alone! Perhaps even some small pleasant family might take the cottage, and in compliment to Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, consent to admit Miss Sidney under their roof. On such a plan, Miss Sidney would be able to live at half the expense, and have many more comforts, besides the society and escort of a married lady at the head of the house."

"I congratulate you, Louisa," said Mr. Davenport, "on the ingenuity and completeness of your friends' devices. Doubtless they know what they might venture to expect from you."

"The insulting man!" cried Louisa, with another appealing look at her sister, "as if I deserved such a speech more than he!"

"But Henry has the upper hand of you, Louisa," observed Mrs. Bligh; "he has never changed his ways or manners since the first moment he came into the place. He was friendly and kind when he gave, and he has been friendly and kind ever since he withheld."

"Yes," replied Louisa, "I confess he has an art which I have yet to learn, if ever I can learn it."

"Louisa always thinks to gain the day by humility," said her husband, concealing much of the pleasure the remark had given him.

"I will then render my triumph doubtful," returned Louisa, "by adding a question as to whether it is an art worth acquiring. My whole heart still revolts at exclusiveness."

"My dear Louisa!" exclaimed Mrs. Bligh, "pray who has been exclusive at Branstone,—Mr. Davenport for eleven years, or his bride for three or four months?"

"Well, certainly Henry's popularity and general good understanding with all degrees—least, little, great, greater, greatest—is something amazing to me," said Louisa; "I feel that though they hate me ever so deeply; they will never hate him. I am sure I hope it is all right to be so popular."

"Well, I hope so too," said Mrs. Bligh, "and if so,—that you will study his rules."

"Then he must give them to me," said Louisa, "and not suppose that I know them instinctively."

"You both intend to draw from the same source," observed Mrs. Bligh.

"Very true," replied the other; "but then he takes one set of rules and I another. He must teach me how to act so as to unite the two."

"Try then, Louisa, for a time," said her husband, "to live upon the rule, 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'"

"That sounds very safe, and indeed easy," returned Louisa, "but how hard in practice! I am sure I meant to be more peaceable with this family than any, and how unfortunately it has turned out! I fear we shall not, in future, be as much at peace together, as if we had been originally rather suspiciously inclined, and kept on formal terms."

"The secret of general peace is exclusiveness, in some sense," observed Mr. Davenport; "it is in the nature of man, and is the providential order of his race; we have but one father and mother, one wife, and a few brothers and sisters. Friends must be limited in the same degree; some more, some less, according to character and circumstances; but we cannot be intimate with a whole world, however worthy each individual may be. If such a line is acted upon, all true friendship or intimacy ceases; and in inferior cases, all ends in disappointment, disturbance, or enmity."

"No, no, not *enmity* here, Henry," cried poor Louisa, who was taking every word to herself; "you are a wise man, and pretty good, now that you speak out; but you shall be a false prophet here."

"I said '*or*,'" remarked Mr. Davenport, smiling; "you may appropriate either, or both, of my other words."

"Well, disappointment, it shall be; experience and friendliness, bought by disappointment.....", Louisa was beginning, when Mr. Bligh opened the door, and looked in without speaking.

"You good kind creature!" exclaimed his wife, "I see you have driven down to the parsonage, and saved us a long delay."

Louisa, at the same moment, cried, "Alice is come! I am sure she is here."

The next instant, Mr. Bligh had thrown open the door, and Alice was in her friend's embrace.

"I said I had better not come up," cried Mr. Grove, who followed Alice, and stood apart, surveying the scene.

"Oh, no, indeed!" exclaimed Louisa, turning from her friend, and most kindly greeting him; "I am thinking of you and Mrs. Grove and every body, all the time, and thank you all for taking all this care of Alice, and bringing her to me,—looking after all," alluding to her sable dress, "so very like her own dear self;" and as Louisa spoke, she felt as if she could love and tolerate all the world, for a hundred years, at least; among the rest, twenty Mr. Groves and twenty wives, though twenty times as objectionable to her fancy as the lady who had latterly been subject to her doubtful affection.

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P.S.—The following particulars are added, for the benefit of those who desire to know how matters proceeded.

Never was a wish more completely fulfilled than Mrs. Bligh's, respecting Louisa's future reflections on her benefaction. Louisa certainly had no temptation to reflect upon it with satisfaction. By dint of entreaty with tutors and pupil, by Mr. Davenport's personal exertion and influence, young Laurence was kept at college a year; the authorities at college could no longer pass over his irregular conduct, and, as the mildest form in which it could be noticed, he was advised to take his name off the books. It was found that he had contrived to run in debt to the amount of nearly two-thirds the whole sum that was proposed to be expended on him. The next question was what was now to be done with him? His mother took a simple view of the case. She considered that Laurence

was the *protégé* of the Davenports, and, as such, was their exclusive property. She, therefore, simply enquired of them, what they meant to do with poor dear Laurry ? and patiently waited their decision. All came upon poor Louisa, who, perfectly unused to the management of such affairs, was at as great a loss as a child. She was ashamed to throw off all the trouble again upon her husband, who had already been at as much pains with Laurence, as if the scheme had been his own devising ; yet what could she do ? Laurence idling at home, consorting with the lowest society in the village, beginning to be a disgrace to all who had to do with him, his mother assuming all that went on under the sanction of the Davenports, and applying to Louisa, from time to time, for tidings of Mr. Davenport's decision respecting her son. So once more, Louisa brought the case before her husband. Mr. Davenport entertained himself at his wife's expense ; indeed, at present, he seemed to have every right to do so, for his *protégé*, Harry Grove, had been going on steadily and economically from the first, and was returning, in advancement and honour, what was expended on him in a more tangible form. Harry had gained a scholarship, on his first entrance at college, and promised well for future success, in some way or other.

The end of Mr. Davenport's consideration on Laurence's behalf, was, to lay the remaining sum in the hands of the family, in order to place him out some way. This was the only scheme that seemed acceptable to those concerned ; and as Mr. Davenport had not hitherto been very successful in his own management for the family, he thought it as well to leave them to their own plans.

Thus, Louisa was relieved from all further care and responsibility.

It was considered that Laurence had best take the line of farming; and the most natural plan was, to place him under his brother Stephen; a part of the money, therefore, was thus expended.

Up to this time, the Boltons and Louisa kept on tolerable terms,—not at all such, however, as to be satisfactory to the latter. All sorts of petty anecdotes and reports, were always afloat in the village, and Louisa found herself constantly thwarted and impeded on all sides,—the sort of incessant wearing annoyance which few can imagine, except they have experienced it; an atmosphere of restraint seemed to surround her wherever she turned, and the settlement of Alice in the village—for Alice did settle there—together with the improved good understanding and intimacy at the parsonage, gave full range to the comments of those who were inclined to scan such affairs. Alice was considered the Groves' relation, and to her, therefore, was attributed the intimacy of them and Mrs. Davenport. On her, therefore, fell the blame of Mrs. Davenport's estrangement from the Boltons and others. Nothing could be farther from the truth than these notions, as the foregoing history would serve to show; and nothing could more excite and provoke Louisa's displeasure, than the world at Chadleigh taking up such notions. Alice, alone, constantly prevented her friend coming to the point openly, though Louisa herself was convinced such a step would have answered no good purpose.

So matters went on for about a year, when Miss Hale received melancholy news from India. This was the

death of her neice, the poor Lizzy, whose marriage had made such a stir among them, not twelve months before. The widower was disconsolate and inconsolable. The next letter showed him in the same frame of feeling, and announced his intention of returning to England, for the benefit of his health, which had been much disturbed. He came, and very shortly invited himself down to Miss Hale's, at Chadleigh, saying he should feel a little cheered by being among friends who so truly appreciated, and so dearly loved his lost Lizzy:—such alone could understand his feelings, and with such alone, could he feel at all at ease to associate. He came, and was warmly welcomed to Chadleigh.

Thus, Alice came once more in contact with Alfred Jenappe; and it did not at all seem that he meant to avoid her. They met. He was as kind, as gentle, as agreeable as ever—perhaps more so; a tinge of melancholy gave all he said the appearance of a deeper seriousness, and he seemed fuller of sympathy. Nor was he changed in person: India had not yet penetrated his complexion. He made demonstrations of kindness or intimacy towards Alice; sending her constantly drawings, or books, upon subjects which had been discussed, or showing her some small personal attention. But Alice, though she pitied him, and though, on seeing him once more she afresh grieved over him—turned away. Her whole heart revolted—almost—at his presence, certainly, at any approach to friendship and kindness. She could tolerate any thing but this; and once, when he alluded to former times, her patience seemed almost exhausted. She feared she felt too contemptuous. “What can we ever have in

sonable prospect of its coming to an end, the idea of making a change in their home was instantly a popular one. A composition was made between the parties, part of which was, that the remains of Laurry's money, which he did not seem to want for the present, should go towards furnishing the cottage that Mr. Frederick Frampton would engage. It was shrewdly suspected by some, that without this assistance Mr. Frampton could not at that moment have purchased the handsome horse he just then rode; nor his wife have placed in her drawing-room one of Broadwood's most expensive instruments. The appointments and furniture of the whole house were in keeping with these; so that Miss Hale was heard to utter a sincere aspiration that the human race could subsist upon rosewood and French polish, for what else the young people and their poor children had to live upon, no soul on earth could guess.

The Boltons, led partly by the accident of Alice and the Groves having been at Brighton, fixed upon that place as a residence; and finding part of the Sidney family visiting it at that time, they carried with them from their Chadleigh friends letters of introduction. Through the former acquaintanceship of Alfred Jenappe with this family, and his present connexion with themselves, the parties became very intimate, and many a long morning was made short by recounting histories and anecdotes of the altered state of Chadleigh since Mr. Davenport married. From being the most sociable, peaceful, happy spot in the world, through the pride and ill-temper of a young wife, it had become perfectly intolerable. Miss Sidney's influence completed the destruction of the last remains of

peace. They had supported Mrs. Davenport from the first moment she came, against every body ; they had since borne with her airs and whims ; but now that they were no longer bound by the ties of neighbourhood, they confessed that it was beyond human patience to bear what they were called on to endure every day. These things, and these alone, had driven them from scenes which were dearer to them than all the world beside. Thus the Boltons talked, and willingly the Sidneys listened.

After the departure of the Boltons from Chadleigh, Louisa found many of her difficulties vanish. She was but little incommoded with tiresome reports, and after a space all vanished away. She had nothing farther to bear in this way, than now and then a solitary remark from Miss Hale, whose little ways and observations she learned to expect, and with the help of Alice, to tolerate.

Miss Hale always made a point of communicating to Alice, as an old friend of Alfred Jenappe, his goings on in India ;—his splendid establishment and mode of living—the almost regal state of Helen—the admiration and homage she received—and last, though not least, their extraordinary and unchanged happiness. “ Dear Alfred !” she would say, “ he never can forget poor Lizzy, of course ; but if ever a man was perfectly happy, without a single drawback, that man is Alfred Jenappe ! I don’t think I would ever have forgiven him marrying any but one who, like Helen, knew and loved our poor Lizzy. That makes it quite a different thing. Don’t you think so, Miss Sidney ?”

Louisa’s grand difficulty now was not to be exclusive on the opposite side. With the Groves, and Alice, and one

other family in the place, she had the society she preferred, and quite as much as she desired, taking into account her family and other engagements ; but she had received a lesson on exclusiveness, that lasted her for life. She had paid the penalty of this, by many a vexatious incident, and many a head and heart ache, until the departure of the Boltons. She never had put the blame of these things entirely on them ; she felt her own share of the fault ; and having thus submitted to the punishment she had brought on herself, she was willing to find and do what was expected of her, rather than simply to please herself. And she was repaid in various ways : among others, her character righted itself in public estimation, and it was observed that certainly the Boltons had said very severe and untrue things of Mrs. Davenport—that though they were so good-natured, they had a sad way of misrepresenting those they disliked.

Another result that followed, upon the departure of the Boltons, or rather upon the public recognition of Mrs. Davenport's virtues and charms ; was the perfect and entire satisfaction of Lucy Grove. We must not call it triumph, since she herself never would consent to that word being thus applied.

"It was no triumph, Papa, in the first instance," said she ; "I knew—I was sure of Mr. Davenport. If I confess it a triumph, it casts a doubt on my certainty."

Mr. Grove paid a compliment to his daughter's consistency, and what was more acceptable to both father and daughter, her mother joined in it, adding a remark which may or may not be considered as a drawback, that "whatever friendship Mrs. Davenport had to bestow, it could never equal Lucy's confidence and generosity."

"But then remember, mamma," replied Lucy, "that was on Mr. Davenport's account, not her own. Now I can love her as 'Louisa,' while I quite forget she was once, only 'the bride' of Mr. Davenport."

Lucy's present highest ambition was indeed fulfilled. She could esteem the wife as she did the husband, and love her a great deal more.

THE END.

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